




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STRANGE ADVENTURES  
OF THE SEA


BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PALESTINE DAYS AND NIGHTS

PERIL OF THE SEA

MYSTERIES OF THE SEA





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NED LOW



# Strange Adventures of the Sea

A BOOK OF MURDERS, MAROONINGS,  
TREASURE-HUNTS, PIRACIES, MUTINIES  
AND  
TALES OF HORROR ON THE HIGH SEAS.

BY  
J. G. LOCKHART

*Author of Mysteries of the Sea.*



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I am much indebted to Mr. Van Dulken for some interesting information about the *Utopia* which he has kindly given me, and to the *Graphic* for permission to reproduce their dramatic illustration of the sinking of the ship ; also to the Trustees of the National Gallery for permission to reproduce the portrait of Captain William Dampier.

J. G. L.



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THE ESCAPE OF JOHN FOX





## THE ESCAPE OF JOHN FOX<sup>1</sup>

IN the days when Queen Elizabeth ruled England, a voyage to the Mediterranean was a very perilous undertaking. The coast of North Africa, from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Marshes of Pelusium, was in the hands of a people whose national trade was piracy; and from such well-guarded havens as Sallee, Algiers and Alexandria the low, swift galleys, packed with armed men, would put out in search of plunder and Christian slaves, a terror to every merchantman that sailed the seas on lawful business. For the Barbary States were at war with all Christendom, to prey upon whom was not only a profitable occupation, but a religious duty; and the prisons and galleys of Egypt, Tunis, Algeria and Morocco were crowded with captives, doomed, most of them, to spend their lives in a slavery from which they had little hope of escaping save by ransom, and which they could only partially mitigate by giving up their religion and becoming Mahommedans.

The account which Hakluyt gives of the adventures of John Fox and his comrades shows the kind of fate that befell a great many merchantmen

<sup>1</sup> Hakluyt : *Voyages*.

and their crews in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In the year 1563 the *Three Half Moons*, a small English merchant-ship, left Portsmouth with a cargo of goods for Seville. She carried a crew of thirty-eight men, and was well furnished with arms and munitions against the dangers of her passage. As, however, she drew near to her destination, not very far from the Straits of Gibraltar (a favourite hunting-ground for pirates, since every ship entering the Mediterranean had to pass through that bottle-neck), she was beset by no fewer than eight Turkish galleys. To escape was impossible ; in a chase the *Three Half Moons* would have stood about as good a chance of getting away as a man on foot pursued by a pack of wolves. On the other hand, to fight against such heavy odds seemed almost equally hopeless.

While, perhaps, the little company of Englishmen was hesitating—just for a moment—between fighting, surrendering and fleeing, the owner came forward and made a little speech, in which he exhorted all on board to trust to God's mercy and take to their weapons.

'Then,' says Hakluyt, 'up stood one Grove the Master, being a comely man, with his sword and target, holding them up in defiance against his enemies.' His example was quickly followed by the master's mate, the boatswain and the purser ; and to encourage the crew drums were

beaten and flutes and trumpets were sounded.

So the fight began : a little epic of the merchant service, the *Three Half Moons* playing the part of the *Revenge*, and the stout-hearted Mr. Grove that of Sir Richard Grenville.

The gunner of the *Three Half Moons* was one John Fox, of Woodbridge, in Suffolk, who lost no time in training his pieces on the Turkish galleys ; and though, as we should say to-day, he was very much out-gunned by the enemy, he kept up a brisk fire until the galleys came alongside. Meanwhile the archers were plying their bows to some purpose, their bolts and arrows falling so thickly among the galleys that, we are told, the number of Turks slain was double the number of Christians fighting.

Nevertheless, the pirates' superiority in guns and in numbers began to tell. Closing in on all sides, they kept up a heavy fire on the *Three Half Moons*, so that in a little while she had become so badly damaged below the water-line that it was doubtful whether she could float much longer. The Turks, on seeing her plight, redoubled their efforts, and tried to board the ship, so as to end the business and make away with the loot before it was too late. But, as they swarmed up the sides, they were given a very warm reception. Led by the owner, the master and the boatswain, and armed with 'brown (burnished) bills and halberds,' the Englishmen charged down on the boarders and for a while held them in check.



The boatswain, in particular, performed prodigies, 'for he fared amongst the Turks like a lion,' and they gave way before him in confusion. At length, however, a shot 'brake his whistle asunder and smote him in the breast, so that he fell down.' With his last breath he urged his comrades to greater efforts, bidding them die gloriously rather than live as slaves. And fight on they did. There was but one man in all the company who failed in his duty, and that was the master's mate, a poor-spirited fellow who had little stomach for the fray and lurked in the background until it was over.

After the fall of the boatswain the odds began to tell more grievously. The pirates had gained a good foothold on the deck, and one by one the Englishmen were overpowered and disarmed. That they were taken alive was no fault of theirs, for, knowing what was in store for them, they tried to sell their lives as dearly as possible. But, since a dead Christian was worth nothing at all, and a live one had his value in the galley and the slave-market, the Turks were careful to kill no more of the crew than was necessary in order to gain the upper hand.

So at last the struggle ended, and the surviving Englishmen, their clothes torn from their backs, beaten and bleeding, were hustled into the galleys alongside. It might be thought that the Turks would have shown some respect for men who had put up so good a fight against such hopeless odds.

But they knew no pity; and their wretched prisoners, chained to the benches of the galleys, exposed to the heat of the sun and the cold of the night and the lash of the overseer, were set to labour at the long sweeps, until in due course the little fleet made its home port of Alexandria.

Here there was a great fortified compound, part harbour, part dock and part prison, where the Turks were wont to lay up their galleys during the winter months when the weather was unfavourable for pirating.

Within the fortifications of this compound a building had been erected to accommodate the galley-slaves during the off-season; and into this the crew of the *Three Half Moons*, loaded with irons, were put, in company with a number of other Christians in similar plight.

Before long the owner and the master of the ship were ransomed by their friends and allowed to return to England; but the others remained. In the summer they were sent out with the galleys; in the winter they were shut up in the prison; they were always half-starved, they were generally ill-treated, and very soon they must have lost all hope of ever seeing their friends again. In this miserable fashion they continued for fourteen years.

The lot of John Fox, the gunner of the *Three Half Moons*, was more tolerable than that of his comrades, for he had a certain skill as a barber, and by cutting the hair and trimming the beard

of the infidel he was able to eke out with an occasional square meal the scanty rations provided by his gaolers. In fact, so useful did he become, and with such industry did he work, that he at length persuaded the keeper of the prison, in return for a small bribe, to allow him to go in and out of the harbour compound as he pleased. Six other prisoners of good conduct, who had been at Alexandria for so many years that their escape was no longer feared, were given the same privilege: that is, they were allowed out of the harbour in the daytime, with no other restraint on their liberty than the irons they wore on their legs.

In the late autumn of 1577 the galleys returned to port as usual. Their masts, sails and gear were taken out of them; and their crews, consisting of two hundred and sixty-eight Christians, belonging to sixteen different nations, were marched into the prison. Among them, of course, was John Fox, who during his fourteen years of captivity had not lost hope of escaping; and for the plan which was now beginning to form in his mind he found two accomplices, both Englishmen, by name William Wickney, of Portsmouth, and Robert Moore, of Harwich. These three put their heads together and decided that for the success of their plot it would be necessary to obtain the support of yet a fourth confederate.

Not very far from the harbour was a little tavern kept by one Peter Unticaro, a Spaniard





THE HARBOUR OF ALEXANDRIA

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and a Christian, who had been a prisoner in Alexandria for about thirty years, and by his good conduct (and the usual bribe) had received permission to carry on his business without molestation. To him one day came John Fox with certain startling proposals, and, as the two appear to have debated these for a matter of seven weeks, it is evident that Peter required a good deal of persuasion before he would take part in so risky an enterprise as a flight from Alexandria. After all, apart from the fact that he was an exile in a strange land, he was not so badly placed; and he must have known that were he caught in an attempt to escape he would certainly be sent back to the galleys.

As we shall see, however, it was very necessary to win Peter's support, and in the end Fox prevailed on him to join the plot. Next, five other trustworthy men—presumably from among the six who were allowed to pass in and out of the harbour—were let into the secret, and on the last day of December 1577 the conspirators took the plunge. The other prisoners were told as much of the plan as was desirable, and after very little persuasion promised their support; whereupon Fox handed over to them a number of files, collected by Peter Unticaro in the town, and warned them that by eight o'clock the next night every man must be free of his irons.

On the following afternoon John Fox and six of the ringleaders met at Unticaro's tavern,

giving out, in order to avoid suspicion, that they had gone there merely to spend a festive evening. When night fell, the moment arrived to carry out the plot. First of all, Peter Unticaro was sent off to the Master of the Harbour with a message, purporting to come from a leading Turk in the city. The Master of the Harbour, so the message ran, was to go at once to the tavern, as the other Turk wished to speak with him there on an urgent matter.

While Peter was away on this errand the eight Christians set about arming themselves. This was a matter of some difficulty. The best weapon that Fox could find was a rusty old sword without either hilt or pommel; but by bending over the blunt end he made some sort of a handle by which to hold it. It was a poor thing, but, as we shall see, it served. As for the others, they picked up what they could, 'such spits and glaives as they found in the house'—anything, in short, that might be trusted to break an infidel's head.

Having armed themselves after a fashion, the plotters laid a little ambush against the return of Peter with the Master of the Harbour, who, besides his other duties, was chief gaoler to the galley slaves. Peter, meanwhile, had delivered his message, and the Turk, who probably was accustomed to meetings by night at the little tavern, at first suspected nothing. He left the fortress, telling the warders as he went out not to bar the gate, since he would be back before very



long ; and so made his way to Unticaro's house.

By now it was quite dark, and when the Turk reached his destination he was puzzled to see no light in the windows, and to hear not a sound coming from the tavern. It flashed on him that the message was a decoy ; but, as he turned to flee, John Fox, who had been hiding round the corner of the house, stepped forward and barred his way. Even in the darkness the Turk recognised him, and knew that he was trapped.

" O Fox," he said, " what have I deserved of thee that thou shouldst seek my death ? "

" Thou villain ! " replied Fox ; " a blood-sucker of many a Christian's blood, and now thou shalt know what thou hast deserved at my hands." And, lifting up his rusty old sword, he struck the Turk so stout a blow that his head was split asunder and he fell to the ground dead.

The little party then stole down to the harbour, where, it will be remembered, the gate had been left unbarred by the master's orders. Guarding it were six Turks, probably rather sleepy, who, on hearing it opened, cried, " Who's there ? "

" All friends," answered Fox, and gained time for his comrades to slip through into the fortress.

" My masters," he said, when they were all inside, " here is not to every man a man, wherefore look you play your parts." And in a very short time the six warders were lying dead on the ground.

The Christians then barred the gate behind



them, and rolled up a cannon against it, so as to prevent anyone from entering for a while.

From the gate they made their way to the chief gaoler's lodging, where, entering his bedroom, they found not only the keys of the fortress and the prison, which lay by his bedside, but also some serviceable weapons. They came, too, upon a chest full of ducats, which Fox refused to touch, saying that he sought only his liberty and that of his comrades, and would have nothing to do with the treasure of the infidels. Peter Unticaro and two of the men, however, were of another opinion, and, opening the chest, stuffed handfuls of ducats between shirt and skin. Yet, as events turned out, Fox was the wiser man, and these same ducats were to prove the ruin of those who took them.

The eight, now well armed, passed on to the prison, where they opened the gate and set free all the other prisoners, who by this time had filed off their irons. At this point the plot met with the first check. When the gates were opened the prisoners broke out, and hunted down and slew all the warders on whom they could lay their hands. Eight of the Turks, however, who were warned in time, climbed on to the roof of the prison and, fortifying themselves as best they could, prepared to sell their lives dearly. Fox and his men came after them with ladders, for they dared not leave these warders at large while the preparations for flight were being made.

There was a brisk skirmish. Fox himself was shot three times through his clothes, without suffering a scratch ; but Peter Unticaro and the two men with the stolen ducats were so weighed down by their spoil that they were unable to move freely, and were killed. At length the roof was stormed and its defenders were overcome. But in the fight one of the Turks, wounded by a sword-thrust, fell off the roof, clear of the prison wall, on to some waste ground outside the fortress. Here he set up such a bellowing that the residents in one or two houses near by, roused from their sleep, came out to see what was the matter. They found the wounded man, and were so far successful in reviving him that he was able to tell them what was happening in the harbour. Thus the alarm was given, and in a very short time the whole of Alexandria was in a ferment.

Meanwhile the Christians were spending a busy night. Some of them were at work ramming up the gate to the harbour, while the rest Fox told off to get ready for sea the best galley in dock, a fine ship called by the Turks the *Captain of Alexandria*. As she had been stripped and laid up for the winter, it was necessary to carry on board her masts, oars and other gear, a lengthy business to be put through by a scratch lot of men in the dark.

The work was by no means finished when ominous sounds without showed that the alarm had been given. The prisoners had now no time

to lose if they were to make good their escape ; in fact, the unlucky incident of the wounded Turk bade fair to bring the whole enterprise to ruin. A large party was detached to hold the gate and the walls at all costs, while the rest redoubled their efforts, loading the galley in frantic haste with food, munitions and oars. It was a race with Time. Would the galley be ready before the Turks, with their better weapons and superior numbers, broke into the fortress ?

The men worked with such a will that the almost impossible happened. Shortly after daylight had come the galley was floated and loaded ; her sails were hoisted, and the men who had been holding the gate and walls leaped on board. They were off at last.

So far the plan had not seriously miscarried ; but perhaps the most difficult and dangerous part of the enterprise lay ahead. Inside the harbour the galley was under shelter, but to reach the open sea she must pass through a narrow neck of water, commanded on either side by forts well armed with cannons. The risk, however, had to be taken. Out of the harbour shot the galley, with all her sails set and all her oars plying, passing through such a storm of cannon-shot that it seemed impossible that she could escape, at any rate without serious injury. Yet so wild was the shooting that she came through scatheless, and not a man aboard was hurt. As she drew away from the forts the Turks swarmed down to the

shore, making a great show of preparing galleys for a pursuit ; but such was the confusion, and so unready for sea were the ships in the harbour, that there was little danger of the fugitives being overtaken.

When the coast of the hated land of their captivity had sunk behind the horizon Fox called together the company of Christians—nearly two hundred and seventy in number—and all fell on their knees to give thanks to God for their wonderful deliverance, and to beseech his aid in bringing them back to their homes in safety. For their troubles were by no means over. Although the season was late, corsairs still prowled the waters of the Eastern Mediterranean, and all the ports were held by Turks, who would have given their former slaves short shrift for their daring escape. Moreover, the refugees had no compass, and could only set their course by the sun and the stars ; the winds were generally contrary, and changed frequently, driving them first one way and then another ; and, worst of all, they had very little food or water. Their supplies were soon exhausted, and during the twenty-eight days that they were at sea eight men died of thirst or starvation.

But on the twenty-ninth day they sighted the island of Crete ; and when they landed at the port of Gallipoli they were given a great welcome by the abbot and monks of the big monastery there, who lodged and fed them until they were fully recovered from their privations. Before

leaving, John Fox presented the rusty sword with which he had killed the Master of the Harbour to his hosts, who hung it up in the monastery as a memorial of the escape.

Embarking once more, the refugees made the port of Taranto, in Italy, where they sold their galley, each man receiving a share of the proceeds. Hardly had they left that town for Naples when seven Turkish galleys from Alexandria appeared off the port, furious at their late discomfiture, and intent on recapturing their lost slaves. But they were too late; the birds had flown, and the galleys returned to Alexandria empty-handed.

Such was the surprising achievement of John Fox, a true Elizabethan, kindred spirit to Drake, Frobisher, and Gilbert. He captured and held for some hours a Turkish stronghold; he liberated two hundred and sixty-eight Christian slaves; he made off with the finest galley in Alexandria harbour under the noses of her owners. It is pleasant to find that his services were not unrecognised. The Pope summoned him to Rome, where he made him some handsome presents and gave him letters of commendation to the King of Spain, Philip II. So much ill has been written of that monarch that some may be surprised to learn that when Fox arrived at Madrid he was generously rewarded, and given a pension of twenty pence a day.

When at last Fox reached England, he was sent for to tell his tale before the Queen's Council; and



they (says Hakluyt), 'considering of the state of this man, in that he had spent and lost a great part of his youth in thraldom and bondage, extended to him their liberality, to help to maintain him now in age, to their right honour and to the encouragement of all true-hearted Christians.'

And so we may leave him, with the hope that the liberality of the Council was a more substantial affair than that of their royal but stingy mistress, and that John Fox lived to a peaceful old age in the enjoyment of it.



THE END OF BLACKBEARD



## THE END OF BLACKBEARD

EDWARD TEACH was one of the biggest ruffians that has ever sailed the seas. The ferocity of his appearance, his great strength, his cruelty, his treachery, his drunkenness and his daring, have combined to make him the pattern of the pirate of fiction. That he should be so regarded is perhaps an injustice to his class. Most of the great buccaneers had some redeeming quality besides courage. Morgan at times served his country well, even if he invariably served himself better ; at any rate, he ended his days in an atmosphere of qualified respectability as Governor of Jamaica. Roberts was an honest sort of scoundrel, whose dislike for the profession of his choice was so deep rooted that he seldom compelled the crews he had captured to adopt it. Avery was rather a simple fellow, who, if he showed little loyalty to his accomplices, was not without compassion for his victims. Even Captain Kidd had occasional qualms, provoked, perhaps, by the fact that he had once held a commission as ' the trusty and well-beloved ' servant of His Majesty King William III ; in fact, attempts—not altogether unsuccessful—have been made to clear his memory of the charge of piracy.

But for Teach no good thing can be said save



that, although he lived like a beast, he died like a man. His character was as black as the beard which gave him his nickname. He knew neither mercy nor faith, and into his short career he crowded a series of crimes so outrageous as to be almost without parallel in the stormy records of the buccaneers. The full story of his adventures and his death is told by Captain Johnson in his *General History of the Pyrates*.

Teach (or Blackbeard, as he was more generally called) was a Bristol man, and, like so many of the pirates, served his apprenticeship in a British privateer. In 1716 he was given the command of a captured sloop, and lost no time in making the discovery that piracy was a more lucrative profession than privateering. Fortune favoured him from the start, for one of his first victims was a big French Guinea-man. To this he transferred, christening his new ship, with a certain unconscious humour, the *Queen Anne's Revenge*. A little later he found an ally after his heart in a Major Bonnet, who, like Blackbeard, had just abandoned an honest calling for the more attractive prospects of piracy, and who was prowling about in a ten-gun sloop. Having joined their forces, they hunted for a time in couples, capturing, burning and plundering, until they became the dread of every honest merchantman between Boston and the coast of Brazil.

To do Blackbeard justice, he was thorough. Neither in his appearance, which was horrible,



EDWARD TEACH (BLACKBEARD)

(From an engraving in Johnson's *General History of the Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Pyrates, etc.*)

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nor in his manners, which were beastly, nor in his audacity, which was colossal, could the most bloodthirsty schoolboy have detected the least failure on his part to play the part of an ideal pirate captain. He was a great bear of a man. His most marked peculiarity was his beard, very long and very black, which straggled up to his eyes and almost covered his face. To enhance its effect he was accustomed to tie it with ribbons into small tails, which he hung over his ears. When he went into action he would wear a sling over his shoulders, with six pistols hanging from it in holsters ; he would then stick lighted matches under his hat, and through the flames and the tangle of hair a pair of fierce eyes would strike terror into his enemies.

Probably he regarded his appearance as a matter of policy, for he was a man who gloried in his wickedness, who established a reign of terror in every ship which he commanded, and who delighted to be thought the Devil incarnate. "Come," said he on one occasion, when he had drunk a little more than his usual ration of wine, "let us make a hell of our own and see how long we can bear it." So he retired into the hold with a few boon-companions, closed down the hatches, filled several pots with brimstone, and set them on fire. When the others, half-suffocated, were crying out for air, he, scarcely affected by the fumes, opened the hatches and let them out, consumed with joy at his own superior powers of

endurance under such truly infernal conditions.

The night before he was killed, as he was sitting and drinking with some of his men, one of them asked him whether, in the event of his death, his wife knew where he had buried his treasure.

"Nobody," he replied, "but myself and the Devil know where it is, and the longest-lived shall take all."<sup>1</sup>

Yet a stranger story was whispered about him by his men after his death. They asserted that upon one cruise his ship carried a man, neither seaman nor passenger, prisoner nor pirate, whom none knew, and whose name was certainly not on the ship's roll. He was seen by several of the crew, now above and now below deck, until one day he disappeared for ever. Their explanation was simple: it was the Devil visiting his ally.

And yet one other incident will show the sort of man that Teach was, and the degree of mastery which he had obtained over his men. One night he was drinking in his cabin with his lieutenant, Israel Hands, his pilot and one other man. (In passing it may be noted that R. L. Stevenson borrowed the name, if not the personality, of Hands for use in *Treasure Island*.) In the course of the evening Blackbeard, without having been in any way provoked, quietly drew out a pair of pistols and cocked them under the table. Thereupon the fourth man, noticing this little manœuvre,

<sup>1</sup> There is a legend that the bulk of Blackbeard's treasure was buried on one of the Isles of Shoals.



and doubtless being acquainted with his captain's table-manners, withdrew from the cabin. When the pistols were ready, Blackbeard blew out the candle, crossed his hands, and fired at the man on either side of him. He missed the pilot with one pistol, but with the other he shot Hands through the knee, laming him for life. When the crew, greatly daring, asked him why he had played such a trick, he cursed them, and remarked that if he did not kill one of them now and then they would forget who he was.

His career was short and merry, as a pirate's should be. His most audacious exploit was the terrorising of Charleston, the capital of the colony of Carolina. For some days he lay off that port, boarding and capturing every ship that tried to enter or come out, and totally interrupting the trade of the colony. At length, emboldened by his success and the impotence of his victims, and being in want of medicine for his crews, he actually sent the captain of one of his sloops into the harbour to demand the immediate delivery of a chest of drugs. In the meantime he held as hostages some of the more prominent men from the colony, whom he had captured, and whom he threatened to kill if his ambassadors were molested or if the medicines were not forthcoming.

While the Council was debating this impudent ultimatum, the pirates who formed the deputation walked freely about the streets of Charleston, to the alarm and indignation of the inhabitants.

Not only, however, were these ruffians allowed to come and go with impunity, but the Council, discreet rather than valiant, decided to make terms with their dreaded enemy, and sent off the medicines demanded. On receipt of these Blackbeard was good enough to release the ships and the prisoners, having presumably no further use for them, after he had relieved them of all their cash and taken as much of the stores and provisions as he needed.

After this successful outrage he concocted a new and highly ingenious plan. His company, he resolved, was becoming too numerous. The more of them there were, the smaller would be each man's portion of the plunder; and, as honour is not always to be found among thieves, his new stratagem was designed to reduce the number of those among whom the loot must be divided. In other words, he determined to appropriate the lion's share for himself, and send the majority of his confederates away empty-handed. But his plan went further even than that. Perhaps he remembered Morgan and that Governorship of Jamaica; or perhaps, like many pirates, he had a strange hankering after respectability. At any rate, whatever his motive may have been, he was anxious to legalise his piracies.

His method of doing so was exceedingly clever. He himself commanded the biggest ship in his little fleet, the *Queen Anne's Revenge*; his

lieutenants, Richards and Hands, each commanded a sloop; while a third sloop served as a tender and treasure-ship. From Charleston Teach sailed north, and, putting in to an inlet on the pretext of cleaning his ship, purposely sent her ashore. He then ordered Hands to come to his assistance, with the result that the sloop ran aground too, so that both ships were left hopelessly stranded. So far all had gone well. Teach at once abandoned his big ship and went on board the tender with forty men; and, as the company had become too large for so small a vessel, contrived to maroon seventeen of the crew on a sandy islet, about a league from the mainland. Since there was no possible means of subsistence on the island, these deserted men would all have perished had not Major Bonnet appeared two days later and taken them off.

Blackbeard's next move was even more curious. He had successfully rid himself of the greater part of his crew; he had established himself in the tender, which contained the greater part of the pirate's treasure. He had now to make good his claim to it, and to vindicate, if he could, his reputation as an honest, law-abiding mariner. With these objects in view he repaired with twenty of his men to the Governor of North Carolina, who would have been justified in hanging the lot of them, but who, in fact, granted them a free pardon! What actually transpired

between Teach and Mr. Eden, the Governor, is not known. 'Governors,' observes his chronicler dryly, 'are but men,' and in the eighteenth century some of them, it would seem, were not over-squeamish. At any rate, it is clear that a bargain was driven, and that in exchange for the pardon, and certain other benefits which were to become apparent shortly, his Excellency was to receive a share of the loot. As a beginning, the Admiralty Court at Bathtown handed over to Teach as a prize the sloop and its contents, in spite of the fact that Teach had never held His Majesty's Commission or letters of marque, that the sloop was the property of English merchants, and that it was filled with plunder taken in time of peace.

Blackbeard's next triumph was purely domestic, if no less disreputable. He managed to persuade his new friend the Governor (as a magistrate) to marry him to a girl of sixteen, although the unfortunate young lady represented his fourteenth matrimonial adventure, and twelve of the other Mrs. Teaches were still alive. But what was a wife more or less to such a man as Blackbeard?

Immediately after his marriage he put to sea again, apparently in the sloop, which was now his lawful property, and, after robbing three English ships of stores and other necessities, encountered two French vessels bound for Martinique. One of them was empty, and the other

carried a cargo of sugar and cocoa. Blackbeard put the crew of the loaded ship on board the empty one and let it go, returning to North Carolina with the other and its cargo. On arrival he made an affidavit to his friend the Governor to the effect that he had found the French ship at sea without a soul on board; whereupon a court was convened, and awarded both ship and cargo to the pirate as a prize. The Governor, for his share in the transaction, was presented with sixty hogsheads of sugar, while his secretary, Mr. Knight, received twenty.

Retribution, however, was at hand. The feelings of the respectable colonists of Bathtown were outraged by the conduct of Blackbeard and his men, by his depredations, his effrontery, and above all by his unholy pact with the Governor. They were disgusted by the daily spectacle of his ruffians, covered with weapons and laden with tawdry finery, ruffling and swaggering about the streets of their town. They resented the pirates' insults and drunken brawls, the blackmail which they coolly levied from the men of property, the liberties which they took with the institutions of the Colony, and the still greater liberties which they took with the wives and daughters of the Colonists. Some of the more influential planters and traders put their heads together. Obviously, of course, it was useless for them to approach the Governor, who certainly would not, and probably could



not, free them from the incubus. In Virginia, however, there were said to be ships of the Royal Navy; and in Virginia, too, there was a Governor who could neither be intimidated by threats nor diverted from his duty by hogs-heads of sugar.

A deputation was accordingly sent to Governor Spottswood, to lay before him the lamentable condition of the Colony of North Carolina under the persecution of Captain Teach, and to solicit his aid in freeing their coasts from such a scourge. Spottswood was a man of very different stamp from the complaisant Mr. Eden. After hearing the deputation, he summoned to a conference with him the captains of the *Pearl* and the *Lime*, two men-of-war which had been lying for some months in the James River, and it was resolved to dispatch a punitive expedition. Evidently the conference did not consider it practicable to send one of the big ships on the enterprise; the coast where Blackbeard was lurking was a labyrinth of shoals and islets, in which his sloop, which drew very little water, would probably have had no difficulty in eluding its pursuer. It was therefore decided to hire a couple of small and handy sloops, to man them from the warships, and send them after Blackbeard. The first lieutenant of the *Pearl*, Robert Maynard, an officer of courage, resource and experience, was appointed to command the expedition, and when it was on the point of

sailing the Governor issued a proclamation declaring war on all pirates in general, and in particular on Blackbeard and his crew, on whose heads a price was set.

Maynard left the James River on November 17th, 1718. The preparations for the expedition had been carried out with the greatest secrecy possible, all the shipping in the river being stopped for some days, until the two sloops had had a fair start. Nevertheless, the news leaked out. Blackbeard was advised of his peril by no less a person than his friend, Governor Eden, while Mr. Secretary Knight, mindful of his twenty hogsheads of sugar, went so far as to collect some of the pirates who were on shore and send them back to their captain to assist him in repelling the threatened attack.

When the news reached Blackbeard he was in his sloop, which lay in Okerecock Bay, some twenty leagues from Bathtown. His reception of it was curious. Perhaps a career of uninterrupted success had made him over-confident ; or possibly he had received so many false reports of punitive expeditions that he was not inclined to credit the truth. At all events, he did nothing until Maynard hove in sight with his ships. He then got ready for action, and, although he had only twenty-five men with him, resolved to stand his ground and fight the matter out. In the meantime Maynard had anchored for the

night. The pirate lay in shoal water, and to come alongside it would have been necessary to negotiate a channel so narrow and intricate as to render dangerous, if not impossible, an attack in the failing light. Blackbeard, it may be added, spent his night of respite carousing with the master of a trading sloop which he had encountered.

In the morning Maynard weighed anchor, and, sending a boat on ahead to take soundings, bore slowly down on the pirate. As soon as he was within range, Blackbeard gave him a broadside; whereupon he hoisted the King's colours and made straight for the enemy. Blackbeard at once cut his cable and stood away from his pursuers. He had guns, and they had nothing but small arms, so that it was obviously his policy to make a running fight, keeping out of musket-range, but within gunshot. The tactical advantages were with the pirates, but Maynard followed them closely. As there was very little wind, he had the oars out, and, while some of his men rowed, the remainder kept up a hot, though not very effective, fire with their small arms. Presently Blackbeard's sloop ran aground, and it looked as though the chase was over. But as Maynard's boat drew more water than the pirate, he was unable to bring her alongside and board. So, anchoring within easy range, he ordered the ballast to be thrown overboard in order to lighten the ship and lessen

her draught. He then weighed anchor again and bore down upon the stranded pirate.

As he approached Blackbeard hailed him from the deck of his sloop. "Damn you for villains!" he roared. "Who are you, and whence come you?"

"You may see from our colours," retorted the lieutenant, "that we are not pirates."

Blackbeard, with characteristic impudence, then bade him send his boat on board, so that he might see who he was and have a talk with him. Maynard, however, was not to be caught so easily.

"I cannot spare my boat," he replied, "but I will come aboard as soon as I can with my sloop."

This answer was not at all to Blackbeard's liking. He took up a glass of liquor and drank to the confusion of his enemies, saying, "Damnation seize my soul if I give you any quarter, or take any from you." To which Maynard replied that for his part he would neither give nor expect quarter.

After this exchange of compliments the action was resumed. As Maynard's sloops drew near, Blackbeard succeeded in floating his ship. The Navy sloops were very ill-protected; their bulwarks were not more than a foot high in the waist, so that the men who were rowing were fully exposed to the pirates' fire. On the other hand, it was necessary to keep the men at the

oars in order to come alongside. Blackbeard seized his opportunity, and, as the sloops came up, gave them a broadside of small shot, which did fearful execution. In the lieutenant's sloop twenty men were killed and wounded, and in the other sloop nine. Thus in a moment Blackbeard had almost destroyed his opponents' numerical superiority.

After this reverse a man of less resolution than Maynard might well have turned back. Indeed, one of the sloops was so disabled that she fell astern and for a time could give no assistance to her consort ; while the men in the other sloop, which had suffered the heavier losses by that damaging broadside, were seriously outnumbered by the pirates.

Maynard, however, had a stout heart, and was resolved to see the business through. As he was no longer strong enough to board the pirate, he decided to tempt Blackbeard to board him. His policy was bold but successful. He reckoned that there was sufficient way on his sloop to bring her alongside the enemy, and accordingly ordered the men with the muskets to retire into the hold, and those who were rowing to lie down under cover and get their cutlasses and pistols ready. He himself and the man at the helm alone kept the deck as they drifted up. When they came alongside the pirates let loose a shower of hand grenades, filled with slugs, small shot and old nails. As the men were all either in the hold or



lying down on the deck, the discharge did very little damage. But Blackbeard, seeing the ship apparently unmanned save for the lieutenant and a few wounded men, determined to board her and settle his score with her commander.

“Jump on board,” he roared to his crew, “and cut them to pieces.”

Thereupon, under cover of the smoke of the grenades, he and fourteen of his men sprang on to the bows of Maynard's ship. The moment was critical. For a few seconds they were hidden from view by the smoke ; but as it cleared and revealed the diabolical figure of Blackbeard, bristling with weapons, with his gang of cut-throats hard at his heels, Maynard gave the signal to his men, who sprang to their feet or poured out of the hold to engage the boarders. Undaunted by their unexpected appearance, Blackbeard rushed forward and engaged Maynard in person. A singular and ferocious duel ensued. Each fired his pistol at the other ; Maynard was untouched, but Blackbeard was wounded. They then set to with their cutlasses, and in a moment the pirate with a terrible blow broke the other's weapon in two. As, however, bellowing with rage and exultation, he was about to cut Maynard down, one of the latter's men providentially intervened and gave the pirate a terrible wound in his neck and throat. The lieutenant got off with nothing more serious than a slight cut on his fingers.

The conflict now became general. Maynard had

twelve sound men and Blackbeard had fourteen. The pirate, despite his injuries, continued to fight with the greatest fury. He stood his ground, cutting and slashing and roaring, until he had received no fewer than twenty-five wounds, of which five were from pistol-shots. So long as he held the deck there was no question of quarter. For the pirates there was the gallows, for the man-of-war's men a death by torture. So they fought on until the scuppers ran with blood and the surrounding sea was dyed red.

The fight ended with dramatic suddenness. As Blackbeard was cocking a pistol he fell down dead, and the resistance of his men at once collapsed. Eight had already dropped, and the remainder, weakened by wounds and demoralised by the loss of their captain, jumped overboard and cried for quarter, which was at once given them.

While this savage struggle had been going on Maynard's other boat, the *Ranger*, had been put to rights and had come up and attacked the pirate sloop. After a short fight the men whom Blackbeard had left on board surrendered, and the engagement was over. When the victors broke into the powder-room they found there a negro with a lighted match. He was a trusty fellow, who had been posted by Blackbeard himself, with instruction that if the fight should go against the pirates he was to apply the match and blow up the ship. This he had been prevented from doing by two of his comrades.



THE DEATH OF BLACKBEARD

1826  
1826

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WANDSWORTH

After his victory, Maynard cut off Blackbeard's head and fastened it to the end of his bowsprit. With this grisly ornament the sloop sailed to Bathtown, where its arrival must have aroused the liveliest apprehensions in the breast of the Governor. His fears were justified, for both he and his secretary were at once compelled to disgorge their ill-gotten hogsheads of sugar. Mr. Knight, in fact, was reduced to such a state of terror by the prospect of an enquiry into the whole business that he took to his bed and died a few days later.

As soon as the wounded were sufficiently recovered, Maynard returned to the James River, with fifteen prisoners in the hold and Blackbeard's head still fixed to his bowsprit. It would be pleasant to record that he and his men received some special reward for their gallant enterprise. Unfortunately they did not, for the treasure was divided among the companies of the *Pearl* and the *Lime*, so that those who had gone on the expedition got no more than those who had stayed behind.

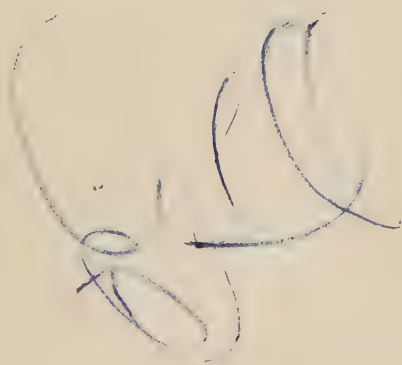
As for the captured pirates, they were put on trial, and thirteen of them were very properly hanged. Of the other two one was an unlucky fellow who had joined Blackbeard out of a trading sloop the night before the engagement. As no act of piracy could be proved against him, the numerous wounds which he had received in the fight were regarded as sufficient punishment for



his offence in resisting the King's men, and he was reprieved. The other was Israel Hands, who had been ashore in Bathtown recovering from the effects of Blackbeard's little pleasantry with the crossed pistols. The people of Bathtown were only too glad to hand him over to justice, and he, too, was tried and condemned to death. Just before the sentence was carried out, however, a ship arrived with a Royal proclamation extending the period of pardon allowed to such of the pirates as might voluntarily surrender. By an extraordinary legal quibble Hands was able to avail himself of this pardon, and to escape the punishment which he had doubtless richly merited.

Such was the fate of Blackbeard Teach and his infamous crew, of whom the best that may be said is that they put up a stiff fight and settled for their crimes with their lives.

THE ADVENTURES OF PHILIP ASHTON





## THE ADVENTURES OF PHILIP ASHTON

PHILIP ASHTON was a young fisherman from the town of Salem, in New England. In 1722, when his adventures began, he was a lad of nineteen, and was serving aboard a small schooner, the *Milton*. The crew consisted, besides himself, of four men and a boy. They had been fishing off Cape Sable, and on Friday, June 15th, stood in for Port Rossoway, in Newfoundland, where they proposed to lie over Sunday. The *Milton* reached her anchorage at about four o'clock in the afternoon. There were several other ships near by, and among them Ashton noticed a stranger, a brigantine which he had never seen before. There was nothing in her appearance to arouse suspicion, and, in fact, the crew of the *Milton* conjectured that she had put in on a homeward voyage from the West Indies.

Two or three hours passed, and shortly before dusk a boat containing four men put off from the brigantine, and presently came alongside the *Milton*, as though to pay a friendly visit. To the astonishment of Ashton and his comrades, however, the four strangers, as they scrambled aboard, suddenly produced pistols and cutlasses and demanded the surrender of the ship.

Although the fishermen outnumbered their assailants, they were unarmed and too surprised to put up a fight ; so that in less time than the telling of it takes the *Milton* was in the hands of the pirates. The crew were forced at pistol-point to embark in the boat, and were carried across to the brigantine, which, for all her innocent appearance, turned out to be a vicious little craft, with an armament of two big guns and four swivels, and a complement of forty-two men.

All this was bad enough ; but it was an even nastier shock to the prisoners when they learnt that they had fallen into the hands of Ned Low, one of the most notorious pirates of those days and in those waters. He was not a man for half-measures ; and, when he had got the crew of the *Milton* safely stowed aboard, he went quietly to work in the gathering darkness, boarding and capturing all the other fishing-vessels in the anchorage, some thirteen or fourteen in number.

Why, it may be asked, did Low, who was beginning to pirate on a pretty big scale, stoop to such a petty larceny as the taking of a few wretched fishing-craft ? Most of the ships were quite useless to him, and none of them contained anything of the slightest value. The fact is, however, that at the moment he was after men, not gold. He was short-handed, and needed recruits ; therefore he had sailed north from his usual haunts in West Indian waters to a coast where he knew he would find what he was looking for.



Directly Ashton came aboard the brigantine the pirates swarmed round him, urging him, at first with blandishments, and, when he held out against these, with threats, to sign their Articles of Agreement and join their merry company. But this Ashton, being a decent lad, steadily refused to do, and went on refusing when the threats were followed by blows.

It is a little curious to find Low's men such sticklers over a matter like the signing of Articles. Partly, of course, they looked on it as a precaution, since once a man had set pen to paper he would thereafter find some difficulty in explaining away his presence aboard a pirate craft, and would consequently be less likely to desert or play false. Perhaps there were other reasons. Pirates were funny people, with a strong bump of veneration for their own laws and customs, even if they respected those of no one else.

When Ashton and his companions persisted in their refusal to sign the Articles, they were taken to the quarter-deck for an interview with Low himself. Presently the pirate captain appeared. He came up to them, pistol in hand, and shouted, "Are any of you married men?"

This surprising question took the men's breath away. They were silent, not daring to reply, for they suspected a trap. Low then fell into a violent rage, cocked a pistol, and clapping it to Ashton's head cried, "You dog, why don't you answer?" He accompanied the question with an oath and a

threat to blow the lad's brains out ; whereupon Ashton, much alarmed, confessed to being a bachelor. The answer seemed to satisfy the pirate, for he walked off and left the men alone.

Later Ashton discovered the explanation of this curious behaviour. Shortly before Low hoisted the black flag his wife had died, leaving a young child at Boston. Low was warmly attached to this child ; when he was not in liquor he would frequently sit and weep to think of it, lonely and abandoned, one parent dead and the other an outlaw. " Oh, miserable Smee ! " Such tenderness, Low was aware, ill became a good pirate, and consequently, when he was recruiting fresh hands, he was careful to take only those who were not likely to be diverted by tender and disturbing thoughts from a conscientious discharge of their duties.

After this first interview with the pirate captain, Ashton and his comrades were sent forward again, when the crew renewed their efforts to persuade them to sign the Articles. They plied the fishermen with liquor, and, when all their endeavours failed to turn honest men into pirates, sent them up once more before Low.

This time they were tackled one by one. Ashton's second interview was as alarming as the first had been. Low again clapped a pistol to his head ; his range of methods was as limited as his vocabulary. " You dog, you ! " he said ; " if you will not sign our Articles and go along

with me, I'll shoot you through the head."

"I am in your hands," replied Ashton, "and you may do with me what you please, but I will not go with you."

He then fell on his knees, weeping and praying to be set free, but the pirate, though, as we have seen, he had his softer side, was unmoved. He told Ashton that he was an impudent dog and should go whether he willed or not. And since he would not sign, his name was entered for him in the ship's books, and he was formally enrolled.

On Tuesday the pirates prepared to leave the anchorage. They moved themselves and their gear into a new schooner they had taken, which they re-christened the *Fancy*, and sent off to Boston in the brigantine such of the prisoners—crocks and married men—as they did not need. Ashton had hoped against hope to be of the number, but he was young and a bachelor, and Low had no intention of parting with him. Nevertheless, just before the pirates weighed anchor he very nearly escaped. At the last moment Low found that his dog had been left ashore. He ordered out a boat to fetch it; two of the prisoners jumped in, and Ashton did his best to join them; but he was held back by the quartermaster. The two men, of course, never came back; they had their chance and took it, and the schooner sailed without them. But their success nearly cost Ashton his life, for the quartermaster was mightily enraged at

their flight. He tried to make Ashton a scape-goat ; he swore that he had been in the plot ; he snapped his pistol at him several times, but luckily it missed fire. At last, with an oath, he flung it into the sea and drew his cutlass. Ashton fled for his life, with the quartermaster hot on his heels ; but, dodging down into the hold, he managed to elude his pursuer by mixing among the other men below.

When the *Fancy* sailed off on her lawless business, poor Ashton's life became a burden to him. Once a week he was haled before Low and told to sign the Articles ; and when he refused he was thrashed with a cane or the flat of a sword. Even when he was not being actually ill-treated he was sufficiently wretched. Coming as he did from a respectable home, he found the life aboard very unpleasant, with the 'prodigious drinking, monstrous cursing and swearing, and hideous blasphemies.'<sup>1</sup>

The *Fancy's* first enterprise nearly ended in disaster. She was cruising outside St. John's, under cover of a fog, when she sighted a large ship riding at anchor in the harbour. Low resolved to capture her. Sending most of his men below, he stood in, pretending to be a harmless fishing-vessel. At the mouth of the harbour, however, when the *Fancy* was within gunshot of her victim, a small boat was met coming out ; and the men in her, on being hailed

<sup>1</sup> John Barnard : *Ashton's Memorial*, 1726.

and questioned, informed the pirates that the big ship was an English man-of-war. They had caught a Tartar. There was no time to be lost. Round went the *Fancy*, and away she sailed with all possible speed.

After this misadventure Low cruised about the Grand Banks, where he met with better fortune and picked up seven or eight ships. His best prize was a French banker<sup>1</sup> of 350 tons, carrying two guns, which he kept and manned.

Next, he made for the Azores, and off St. Michael's fell in with a fat victim, a large Portuguese pink<sup>2</sup> laden with wheat, which surrendered to him without resistance. The pirates threw most of the wheat overboard, burned the banker and transferred themselves to the pink. From St. Michael's they sailed to Teneriffe, and thence to the Cape Verde Islands, where they took a sloop of Bristol and added her to the little squadron. They did not keep her long, however, for she outsailed the other two ships and presently made off, prize crew and all.

Low was now working back towards the West Indies, where he intended to refit and obtain water and provisions. Off the coast of Brazil he fell in with a terrible storm, the seas running so high that he almost despaired of weathering it. (Ashton noted with grim satisfaction the dejection and terror of the pirates when confronted

<sup>1</sup> A ship with a very narrow stern.

<sup>2</sup> A vessel employed on the cod fishing on the Newfoundland banks.



with the prospect of eternity.) However, the two ships won through, rather battered, and reached the three islands known as the Triangles, where they were to be careened.

Here Ashton was nearly drowned. He had been moved to the pink, and with a number of other men had been sent up aloft into the shrouds and yards, so as to heel the ship over and expose her bottom. Her ports, however, had been inadvertently left open, and as she came over the sea poured in and capsized her. Ashton was flung into the water, but, though a poor swimmer, he managed to reach a buoy, to which he clung. At first the boat that was picking up the men from the pink disregarded his cries for help and refused to take him off, but at length he was rescued.

Low himself nearly perished in this catastrophe. When the ship went over he was sitting in the stern cabin with the doctor. He made a rush for the port and climbed through, but the doctor, attempting to follow him, was driven back by a surge of incoming water. Low, however, thrust his arm through the port, caught hold of the man, and dragged him out, thus saving his life.

The pirates were much downcast at this mishap. Although only two of their number had been drowned, they had lost their best ship and most of their stores. Moreover, they were very short of fresh water, which was almost unobtainable

in the Triangles ; and during their voyage to Grenada, which lasted sixteen days, they were reduced to a ration of half a pint of water daily for each man.

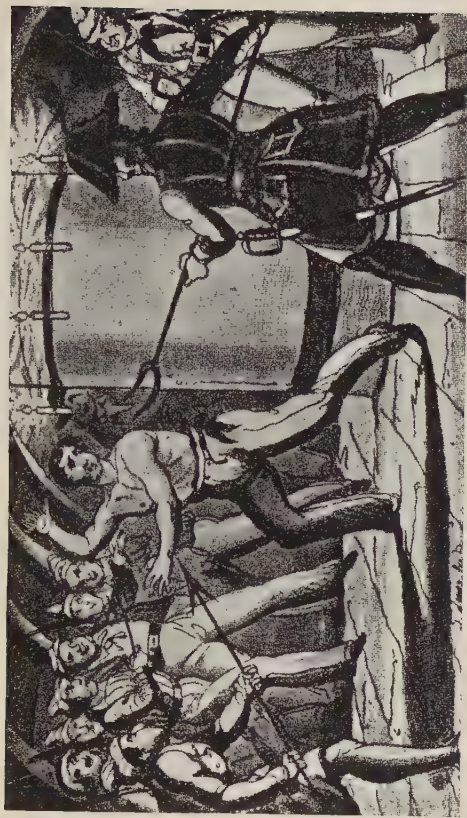
At Grenada, then a French Colony, Low again sent most of his men below and pretended to be a peaceful trader—a favourite trick of his. By this means he managed to procure water, but he did not get away without trouble. For some reason the strange ship attracted the attention of the authorities ; they suspected her, not of piracy, but of smuggling ; and when she left the harbour they sent after her a seventy-ton sloop, armed with four guns and manned by thirty hands. As the *Fancy* carried eight guns and ninety men, the French had an unwelcome surprise when they came up with her and summoned her to heave-to. There was a brisk little fight, and the sloop was captured.

The pirates then cruised about for some time in West Indian waters, capturing nine or ten small ships, and eventually making for the Spanish settlements of Cartagena and Portobello. On the way they had another narrow escape. They sighted two large vessels and made after them. As they drew near to them, to their consternation one of their quarries suddenly turned towards them. It was H.M.S. *Mermaid*, an English frigate. The tables were now turned. The pirates fled, crowding on all sail ; but, do what they might, the man-of-war gained on them rapidly.

In desperation the schooner and the sloop separated, and to Ashton's relief (for he was in the former) the frigate went after the sloop, which Low himself was commanding. But when the two ships were within gunshot, and things began to look pretty black, the pirates played a pretty trick. One of the sloop's crew told Low of a shoal near by, over which the sloop, which drew very little water, could pass. Low ran his ship over it; the man-of-war tried to follow and grounded; and thus for a time the gallows were cheated.

In the chase, however, the two pirate craft had been separated. Low disappeared with the sloop, and Spriggs took the schooner into the Gulf of Honduras, putting in at a small island called Utila, where he careened her. The crew consisted of twenty-two men, several of whom had been brought, and were being kept, aboard by force; and eight of these, including Ashton, now began to plan their escape. It was a feeble sort of plot. They knew that Spriggs proposed sailing north to New England, in order to obtain provisions and recruits, and they agreed that when they were off that familiar coast they would catch the pirates napping, overpower them and bring the ship into port.

But, just as things seemed to be looking a little more promising for Ashton, all his hopes were dashed to the ground. While the schooner was lying in the bay a sloop appeared. It was Low. Both he and Spriggs recognised the other's ship,



CAPTAIN SPRIGGS AND HIS MEN "SWEATING" A PRISONER

(From an Engraving in *History and Lives of the Most Notorious Pirates*)





but each thought, for some reason, that the other had been captured and was now in hostile hands. There was actually an exchange of shots before a mutual recognition put an end to the engagement. A joyful meeting of rogues followed.

Unfortunately, Spriggs had got wind of the plot aboard the schooner and of Ashton's part in it. He went off to the sloop at once to tell Low all about it and to demand the summary punishment of those concerned in it. Low, however, happening to be in a good temper, and perhaps not considering the conspirators to be very dangerous, laughed the matter away ; and Spriggs, though he returned to his ship in a towering rage, dared not do much without his chief's support. But he sent for Ashton and taxed him with his share in the plot. " You dog, Ashton," he cried, " you deserve to be hanged up at the yardarm for designing to cut us off."

Ashton admitted his guilt. " I had no intention," he pleaded, " of injuring any man on board ; but I should be glad if they would allow me to go away quietly."

If the pirates had not been in such high spirits over their recent escape and present reunion the matter might not have ended so tamely.

Both ships now sailed on to Roatan, a large island in the outer waters of the Gulf of Honduras, surrounded by smaller islands called keys. Here they anchored. Low and the other leaders

landed on one of the keys, where they built themselves huts and settled down to several days of feasting and hunting.

There, off Roatan, came Ashton's first real chance of escaping ; and he took it. On Saturday, March 9th, the cooper of the schooner and six men were sent ashore to fill water-casks. Just as they were putting off to land, Ashton called to the cooper and begged to be allowed to join the party. The cooper was a kind-hearted fellow. He was sorry for the boy ; he knew that he had been confined to the ship for nine months ; and perhaps he was not unwilling to give him a chance of making off. At any rate, he allowed him to come. Ashton jumped in the long-boat just as he was, without shoes or stockings, and dressed in 'an Osnaburgh frock and trousers, and a milled cap.'

When the boat reached the shore he was careful to lend a hand in unloading the casks and rolling them to the watering-place. When the work was done he had a good drink of water and strolled off along the beach, picking up stones and shells. Presently, as soon as he was nearly out of musket-range of the others, he began to edge towards the wood which ran down close to the shore. The cooper shouted to him to ask where he was going.

"For cocoanuts," called back Ashton, pointing to some trees just ahead.

Directly he reached the shelter of the woods

he took to his heels, running as fast as his bare feet and the thickness of the scrub would allow. The pirates were after him at once, and came so hot on his tracks that he found it necessary to crawl into a dense thicket and lie up for a while. Crouching down, he could hear the searchers hallooing round his hiding-place, and at times could even catch what they said. "The dog is lost in the woods," remarked one, "and cannot find the way out again." "He has run away," said another, "and won't come back to us." As the worthy cooper blundered past the thicket Ashton heard him growl that if he had known this was going to happen he would not have taken the boy ashore. Secretly, perhaps, he was not unsympathetic, as when it was time to take his party back to the ship he called out loudly: "If you do not come away presently, I shall go off and leave you alone"—surely a gentle hint that soon the coast would be clear.

Ashton stayed a little longer in hiding before he ventured out. But the pirates made no further attempt to recapture him. They were accustomed to desertions, and one hand more or less was no great matter. For five days they stayed in the neighbourhood of the island, and then, to Ashton's relief, the two vessels sailed off.

His situation, however, was far from happy, even though he had achieved his first object and escaped from the pirates. He was marooned. The island was uninhabited, and he had no boat,

no provisions, no weapons, no shoes, and—worst of all—very little prospect of ever being taken off. At first, overjoyed at the thought of his newly won liberty, he was inclined rather to look on the brighter side. Certainly he might have struck a less favoured spot. Roatan was a large island, ten or eleven leagues long. It was well watered, and abounded in wild fruit, such as figs and grapes. In the woods there were plenty of wild hogs and of a kind of deer, but he had no means of trapping them; while on the beach were countless tortoises, and though, as he had no means of kindling a fire, he could not cook their flesh, he would hunt for and eat their eggs. But he lived principally upon the fruit he found.

Such a Garden of Eden did not lack serpents, one of which, on one occasion, ‘opened its mouth wide enough to have thrown a hat into it, and blew out its breath at me.’

Ashton does not seem to have been a very resourceful young man. Robinson Crusoe would surely have made more of the island, and the Swiss Family Robinson would have worked wonders in it. But Ashton did not even discover how to make a fire. This he confesses in a passage which will appeal to every boy who has ever tried to obtain a spark by rubbing two sticks together.

‘I had often heard of the fetching of fire by rubbing of two sticks together, but I could never get any this way.’

Later, when he had left the island, he found out how to do it :

‘ Take two sticks, the one of harder, the other of softer wood, the dryer the better ; in the soft wood make a sort of mortice or socket, point the harder wood to fit that socket, hold the softer wood firm between the knees, take the harder wood between your hands with the point fixed in the socket, and rub the stick in your hands backward and forward briskly, like a drill, and it will take fire in less than a minute.’

He built himself a hut of branches and palmetto leaves, and in this for nine months he lived ; nor during all that time did he see another human being or even sight a ship in the Gulf.

After a while he found the mosquitoes so troublesome that every day he would swim out to a small and sandy key, which, being bare of undergrowth, was free of insect life. There he would lie until evening. The passage to it was no pleasure outing, for on one occasion a shark attacked him, and he was only saved by the shallowness of the water.

In time his health began to suffer. His diet of fruit and the eggs of tortoises was not very nourishing ; the rains began ; and he had no fire at which to dry himself and his rags of clothing. But, curiously enough, almost his worst trouble was his lack of shoes : his feet never toughened, and he suffered agonies from the stones and shells on the beach and from sharp twigs in the woods.



Once, when he was sitting under a tree nursing his wounded feet, a wild boar ran savagely at him. He was too weak and dejected to make any resistance, but as the boar charged he managed to pull himself up into the tree. He was only just in time, as the boar made off with shreds of trousers festooned round his tusks.

Above all, the poor boy was very lonely and very homesick. He would sit upon the shore and think sadly of his parents in far-off New England ; and nothing but his steadfast trust in God kept him from utter despair. He tells us that for long he made a point of observing Sunday, until in his weariness he lost count of the days.

In November 1723, when he had nearly reached the limit of his endurance, relief came. One day, while he was lying on the shore, a small canoe suddenly appeared off the island. Ashton's delight was tempered by fear lest the newcomer should prove to be a pirate. He tried to run into the woods, but found that he was too weak to move. Presently the man landed and came towards him, obviously amazed at encountering anyone on the island, and rather suspicious of Ashton's wild and ragged appearance. But a little explanation soon put matters right, and the stranger then showed himself a friend indeed. He was (needless to say !) a Scotsman ; he refused to disclose his name, and from his reticence on the point Ashton deduced that he had had a shady past ; he had lived, he said, for twenty-two years among the

Spaniards, but at length had incurred their enmity. So he had fled in his canoe to the keys, taking with him his gun, some ammunition and a dog.

With his arrival life on the island became a much more tolerable affair. After nine months of solitude any sort of companion was welcome, and the Scot was able to kindle a fire, to shoot the wild pig and deer, and to give the sick boy a meal of pork and venison.

But this interlude did not last very long. On the third day the stranger went off in his canoe to visit some neighbouring islands, promising to return in a few hours. He never came back. About an hour after he had gone a tremendous hurricane swept the bay. Night fell; still there was no sign of the Scot and his canoe; and when a few days had passed Ashton decided that he must have been capsized and drowned in the storm.

Although, however, he was alone again, and much distressed by the loss of his companion, he was now much better off than he had been before. The Scot had left behind him a knife, a bottle of gunpowder, a flint, some tobacco and some pork. The boy could light a fire, cut up a tortoise and cook a meal; which enabled him to survive the winter rains.

Two or three months later he had another stroke of luck. One day, as he was wandering aimlessly along the beach, he found a small

canoe which had evidently been washed ashore. As it was quite seaworthy, he was now the owner of a craft in which he could pay visits to the surrounding islands.

After one or two trial trips, he determined to try to reach Bonacco, a large island five or six leagues distant ; and after provisioning the canoe with figs and grapes and tortoise meat he started on his voyage of discovery. As he drew near to his destination he was much excited at seeing a sloop lying off the east end of the island. Still, he had to be wary. In those waters the chances were that any vessel would be a pirate or a Spaniard. It was necessary to tread very cautiously until he was quite sure how the land lay. And in this he was wise.

He put in at the west end of the island, hid his canoe close to the shore, and started to walk through the woods, making for a point from which, without being seen, he could reconnoitre the sloop and determine her character.

He had a troublesome march : the woods were very thick, his feet were tender, and for both these reasons he was forced to travel much of the distance on his hands and knees. At the end of three days and nights he was within a mile or two of the spot off which he judged the sloop to be lying. But when he reached the edge of the woods there was not a sign of any ship to be seen.

Overcome with disappointment and fatigue after his fruitless and exhausting journey, he now

sat down facing the sea, with his back against a tree-stump, and fell asleep. Suddenly he was awakened by the report of muskets, and, starting up, was horrified to see, pressing in towards the shore, nine large canoes full of men, who were firing at him. He turned and bolted into the woods, the men, who were Spaniards, coming after him and calling, "Oh, Englishman, we'll give you good quarter."

But Ashton, dazed with sleep and thoroughly scared, ran on; while the Spaniards continued to chase him, pausing, whenever they caught a glimpse of him in the scrub, to fire their muskets at him, so that bullet after bullet whistled past his ears. At length he got clear and lay up in a thicket, where he stayed until the Spaniards gave up the search and returned to their boats.

Some hours later, when he judged that the danger was past, he crept cautiously back to the shore, and from there saw the sloop which he had sighted some days previously. She was flying English colours, but, as she was towing the Spaniards' canoes out of the bay, Ashton gathered that she had been captured and was being taken off to a Spanish port.

On the next day he discovered how narrow an escape he had had from death. On examining the tree-stump against which he had been resting when the Spaniards surprised him, he found six or seven bullets embedded in the wood about a foot from where his head had rested.

After this adventure he had had enough of Bonacco, and, marching wearily back through the woods, he retrieved his canoe and returned to Roatan, where he spent six more months of loneliness and monotony.

One afternoon in June, however, he was sitting on a small key close to the island, when he saw two canoes about a hundred yards away and making for Roatan beach. For a while he lay low and watched the strangers; presently they landed, and he could see their surprise when they found the fire he had left burning close to the shore. Then he slipped into his canoe and rowed across, landing some little way from where the two men were standing, and feeling confident that on his own ground he could easily escape from them if they showed themselves hostile. Soon they sighted him, and at first appeared to be as suspicious of him as he was of them. Gradually they drew near, walking very warily, as though they feared an ambush, and making signs of friendship. At length they were close enough to talk, and to introduce themselves. They were 'bay-men'—settlers of a sort—who ranged the islands in the Gulf of Honduras, living from hand to mouth by hunting, fishing and—at times—a little mild piracy.

To Ashton, at any rate, they were very friendly. They fed him, clothed him, and took him back with them to their settlement, a small island not far from Roatan, which they called the







anchorage. Presently one of them, a brigantine, ran close in and sent her boat ashore to fetch water. Being much on their guard against pirates, Symonds and Ashton did not show themselves until they were satisfied of the honesty of the visitors. Then they went forward to meet them. They found that they came from a convoy of vessels, bound for Jamaica, which had been scattered in the hurricane; and the brigantine, as luck would have it, hailed from Salem, Ashton's home, and was commanded by an acquaintance of his, Captain Dove.

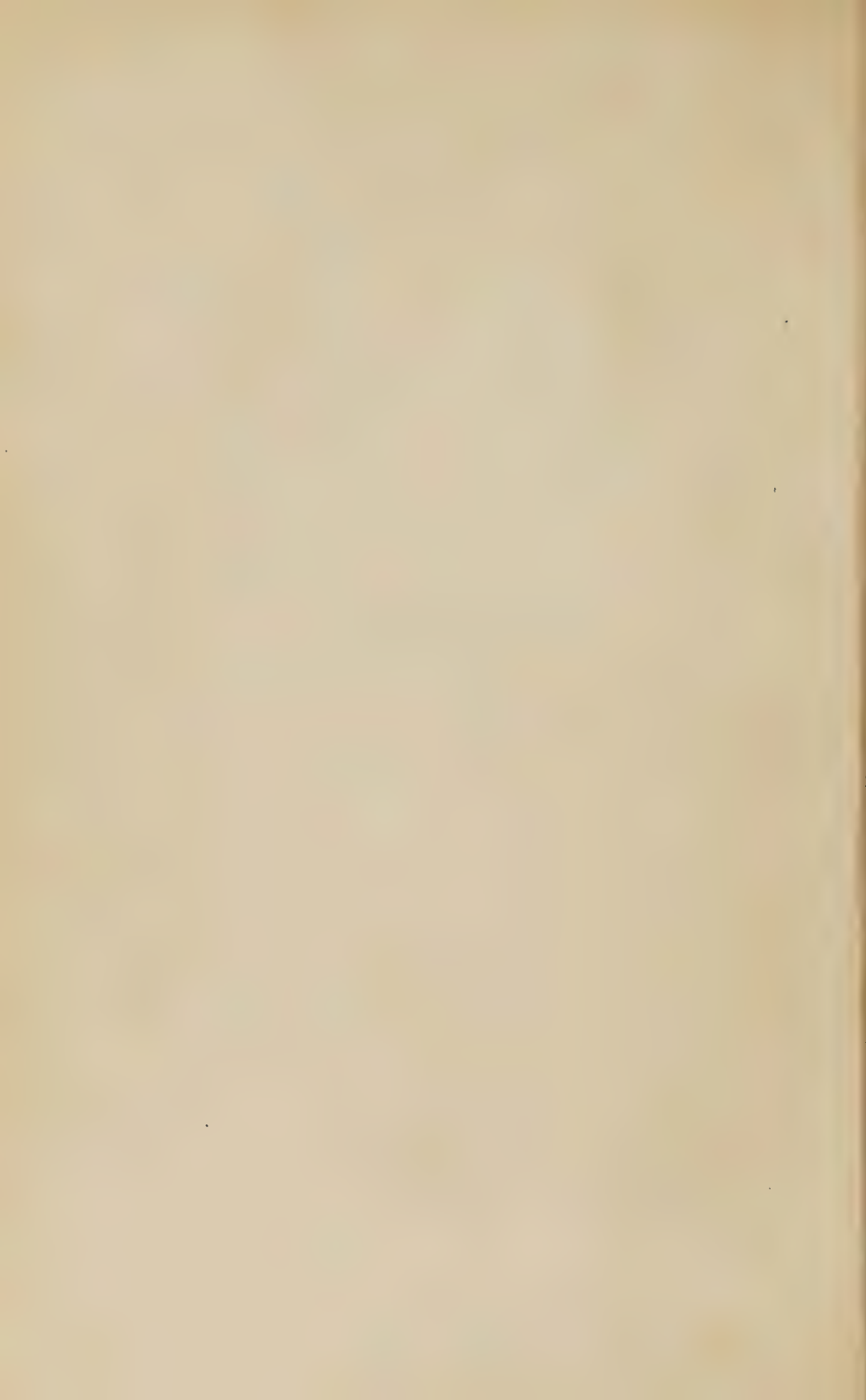
So came about Ashton's final release from the islands where he had marooned himself. Captain Dove not only undertook to give him his passage home, but, as he had recently lost one of his men, took him into pay; and the brigantine, sailing through the Gulf of Florida, arrived in Salem harbour on May 1st, 1725.

Ashton had been away from his home for two years, ten months and fifteen days, and from the hour when Captain Low had swooped down on the fishing-fleet in Port Rossoway his parents had had no word of his fate. In the end they had despaired of ever seeing him again; and we can well believe that when he walked into his father's house on that May evening he 'was received as one coming to them from the dead.'



# MAROONED





## MAROONED

### I

THERE is a good deal to be said for the old practice of marooning. It might well happen that on board your ship there was someone so uncongenial that for the preservation of discipline and the successful conduct of the voyage it was a matter of the utmost necessity to get rid of him. What were you to do? To drop him overboard on a dark night were perhaps too extreme a measure: yet you really could put up with him no longer. In such a predicament your obvious course was to land him on some convenient island; maybe on one well watered, and favoured by nature with a temperate climate and abundant resources, preferably on one which was not likely to be visited by any other ship for a few years. There you left him, clear as to your conscience, and secure in your knowledge that he was unlikely to turn up and trouble you in the immediate future. The device was especially popular among the buccaneers, and probably averted many a bloody dispute over leadership or the division of treasure. We have all heard of Ben Gunn, the marooned mariner of *Treasure Island*; at different

times there must have been plenty of Ben Gunns scattered about the islands of the Caribbean. What, in fact, is sometimes forgotten is that marooning was not merely a form of punishment. It was, as often as not, a way out of a difficulty, and among a lawless community like the buccaneers it might well be regarded as an act of mercy; even more than to-day it is regarded as an act of mercy when the death penalty is commuted to a life-sentence. Nowadays, of course, the practice is at a discount. The pirates are all gone, and, anyway, voyages have become so short that marooning is scarcely worth the trouble—or the risk of subsequent litigation when the marooned one obtains his liberty.

The most famous of all marooned mariners is Alexander Selkirk, though whether he is entitled to his fame is another matter. It rests mainly on the tradition that he was the original Robinson Crusoe; that Daniel Defoe, hearing the story of his life on Juan Fernandez, made it the basis of his book.

It is always an ungrateful task to overturn an established belief; but, as Mr. Bennet Copplestone has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the connection between Selkirk and Crusoe is more than doubtful. Selkirk was marooned and, even so, up to a point was a consenting party; Crusoe was properly cast away. Selkirk was dropped on Juan Fernandez, off the coast of Chili; Crusoe was thrown

<sup>1</sup> *Blackwood's Magazine*, April, 1925.

up on an island off the coast of Brazil. And while Crusoe's island was really 'desert,' in the sense that it was unknown and unvisited, Selkirk's—chosen, incidentally, by himself—was a familiar port of call for the buccaneers, was also visited on occasion by the Spaniards, and had even had earlier residents. In short, when the fact and the fiction are compared, it certainly seems quite possible that when Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe* Selkirk's story was not in his mind at all.

Whether or not, however, we decide to identify Selkirk with Crusoe, the former's story is quite interesting enough to stand on its own merits. Alexander Selkirk (or Selcraig) was a native of Largs, in Scotland. In 1703 he joined Captain William Dampier, the noted buccaneer, on a privateering voyage to the Plate River, where it was hoped to pick up some Spanish galleons. The enterprise was not particularly well managed. Owing to Dampier's dilatory conduct, the Spaniards had warning of his coming, and the main object of the voyage was accordingly perforce abandoned. Dampier then took his ships round Cape Horn and made for Juan Fernandez. This island, though uninhabited, was claimed by the Spaniards, who, being unwilling or unable to keep a garrison there, contented themselves with an occasional visit of inspection. The buccaneers knew all about it. In previous years they had found it a useful haven after the buffetings of

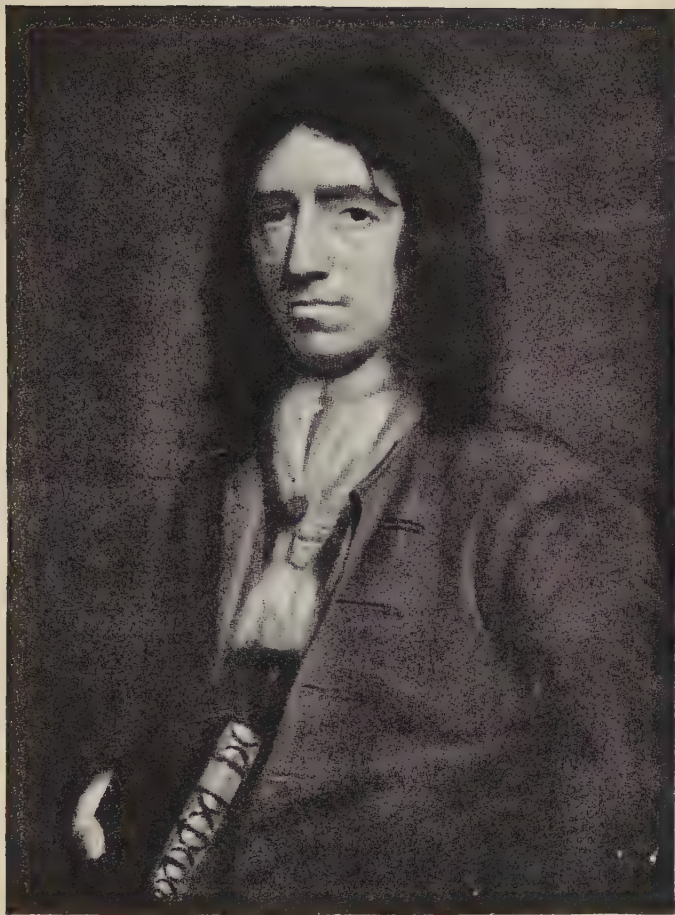
the Horn passage ; they could be sure of finding food and water there ; and it was not at all a bad base for operations against the Spanish settlements on the west coast of South America.

Selkirk was at this time sailing-master of the *Cinque Ports* galley, one of Dampier's two ships. During the voyage his commander, Captain Pickering, had died, and with the latter's successor, Captain Stradling, Selkirk was on the worst of terms. While at Juan Fernandez Stradling had a violent quarrel with some of his men, which, though it was patched up, probably left a good deal of bad blood behind ; and we may suppose, from the sequel, that Selkirk was involved in this dispute.

Just outside Juan Fernandez the buccaneers fought an indecisive action with a French ship ; and a little later they succeeded in capturing a Spaniard. But on the whole the cruise was proving a disappointment, none of the high expectations which had been formed having come to anything. This was attributed principally to the vacillating behaviour of Dampier, who, despite his reputation, was not a very successful commander ; and so strong did the feeling against him become that at length he and Stradling parted company, each taking his ship off to work independently.

Selkirk, however, had had enough of Stradling. When the *Cinque Ports* galley returned a little later to Juan Fernandez there was a further hot

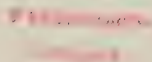




CAPTAIN WILLIAM DAMPIER

(From the painting by T. Murray in the National Portrait Gallery,  
reproduced by permission of the Trustees)

*To face page 70*



dispute between the two men, which ended in the sailing-master asking to be put ashore. Stradling gladly consented, and ashore Selkirk went. At the last moment, when his belongings had been deposited on the beach, and the boat had put off again for the ship, his heart failed him, and he begged to be taken aboard once more. But Stradling would not hear of it. The man had asked to be marooned; marooned he should be. And marooned he was.

Curiously enough, Selkirk had reason afterwards to be grateful to Stradling for his firmness, since after leaving Juan Fernandez the *Cinque Ports* fell into the hands of the Spaniards, and her crew were taken to Lima, where they spent four miserable years in prison. So her late sailing-master had the best of the bargain. His 'desert' island was a much more delectable spot than a Spanish prison. Its climate was perfect. It was well wooded, had plenty of water, and abounded in fruit and vegetables. Even milk and fresh meat were procurable, for one of the earlier visitors had landed some goats, which had multiplied rapidly. Later, it is true, the Spaniards, in order to annoy the buccaneers, had introduced some dogs and cats, hoping that they would exterminate the goats; but the cats preferred to prey upon the swarms of rats they found everywhere, and the dogs, while they certainly drove the goats to the more precipitous parts of the island, were unable to follow them there.

Selkirk, at least, was not likely to starve, for the island was teeming with livestock. Moreover, he was allowed to take certain articles with him from the ship: he had his clothes, his bedding, a firelock, some powder, bullets and tobacco, a hatchet, a knife, a kettle and a few books.

For a young and active man there was no great hardship in life under such circumstances and in such surroundings. Indeed, Selkirk was not even the first to find himself alone upon the island. In 1680 a Muskito Indian called William had been landed and left by the buccaneers, and had lived there very happily for a matter of three years. He seems to have made a much better job of 'desert' island life than did Selkirk, at any rate at first. The latter, during his earlier months on the island, was content to live from hand to mouth on the seals and the shellfish he picked up on the shore. Later he became more enterprising. He built himself a hut of *pimiento* wood, thatched with grass, and by constant practice acquired such abnormal activity that he was able to run down and capture the goats, thus providing himself with fresh meat without wasting powder and shot. Being much annoyed by the rats, he succeeded in catching and taming some of the cats, to whom he soon became very attached. In the evenings he would teach them and his domesticated goats to dance—a queer occupation for a marooned sailor. He hunted a great deal, not only for the pot, but also for the

sake of the sport ; and when he caught more goats than he needed for food he would release them, after carefully notching their ears in token of his ownership.

On one occasion he nearly lost his life while out hunting. His quarry took him to the edge of a precipice, and before he could stop himself Selkirk and the goat tumbled together to the bottom of a steep cliff. The goat, which was killed, broke his fall and saved his life ; but he lay half-conscious at the foot of the precipice for many hours before he was strong enough to crawl back to his hut.

Apart from hunting goats and dancing with his cats, Selkirk gave up much of his spare time to religious exercises. In the old days he had been a hard-living buccaneer, probably no better and no worse than his comrades ; but his solitary life on the island worked a complete change in him. Among the books he had brought with him was a Bible, and this was to prove his great comfort during the long hours of his exile. He observed the Sabbath with Scottish strictness, began and ended each day with prayer, and even constructed for himself a rough chapel.

It was, of course, the simple life, but the simple life under almost ideal conditions. Selkirk undoubtedly preferred his solitude to the inside of a Spanish prison. Twice while he was on Juan Fernandez the Spaniards visited the island, and on both occasions he ran away and hid until



they were gone. But he never lost his craving for human society, provided that it was of the right sort, and he was always on the look-out for an English ship. Curiously enough, too, he was perpetually troubled by a morbid idea connected with his cats. He had a horror of dying on the island, lest, when no one remained to feed his pets, they would devour the body of their late master.

Selkirk had been four years and four months on Juan Fernandez when his relief arrived. His rescuers were his old comrades, the buccaneers. In 1709 two ships, the *Duke* and the *Duchess*, appeared, under the command of Captain Woodes Rogers, with whom, in a subordinate capacity, was Selkirk's former chief, William Dampier. When the visitors landed they were met by a wild-looking man dressed in goatskins, who at first found some difficulty in articulating properly. Dampier, however, identified him, and gave him a good character; and he was taken aboard. Before leaving the island he gave an exhibition of his prowess in hunting goats, easily outstripping the bulldog from the *Duchess*, and bringing down his quarries with an ease and an agility that astonished the onlookers.

Selkirk very soon picked up the thread of civilised life again. It took him some little time to accustom himself to salt food; and it took him even longer to wear boots in comfort, since during his four years on the island he had gone barefoot. But these were small matters. His



VIEW OF JUAN FERNANDEZ

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exile was ended, and a few months later he arrived back in England to find himself a nine days' wonder.

## II

Selkirk's experience, of course, was what we may term marooning *de luxe*. It is doubtful whether he would have fared so well—indeed, whether he would have survived at all—had conditions been less propitious. There is, for instance, the story of Peter Ferrano, who had none of his advantages. Peter, it is true, was not marooned; he was cast away with literally nothing but the clothes he was wearing. And the spot upon which he was cast was little more than a large sandbank near the coast of Peru. He stayed there for seven long years, and how he managed to keep body and soul together is a mystery. There were turtles and shellfish to eat; there were a few puddles of fresh water to drink; moreover, being a handy fellow, he made a storage-tank for rainwater out of the shells of the turtles. But apart from the turtles and the shellfish and the sand—heaps of it—and a few planks that had been washed ashore, he had no resources at all.

At the end of three years he was joined on his island by a companion in misfortune, cast up by the waves just as Peter had been. When Peter—horribly unkempt—met the new arrival—horribly bedraggled—each made the pardonable

mistake of supposing the other to be the Devil. Peter turned and fled, exclaiming, "Jesus, Jesus, deliver me from the Devil!" Nor would he come near the stranger until the latter, who was the first to recover from the illusion, had—from a safe distance—recited the Apostles' Creed.

It is a sad reflection upon human nature that these two wretched men had not been together on the island for very long before they quarrelled and nearly came to blows. They then decided to separate and live apart; but a little solitude soon composed their differences, and they returned to a joint establishment, staying on the island four years together before they were found and rescued.

Having told their story, I am bound to add that the evidence for it is not very satisfactory; which is the more regrettable since the tale, if true, would supply a remarkable example of endurance.

### III

We must return, however, to our maroonings. The story of Robert Jeffery, not so familiar as that of Alexander Selkirk, is quite as well worth recalling. Jeffery was a native of Polperro, in Cornwall. In 1808, when he was eighteen years old, he joined the *Lord Nelson*, a privateer in the French Wars. Unluckily for him, about that time the Royal Navy was very short of men; before he had been very long in the *Lord Nelson*



the brig *Recruit*, commanded by Captain Lake, sent a party aboard, and, in the rough and ready fashion of the day, pressed Jeffery and nine others into His Majesty's service. This was not at all what Jeffery had bargained for when he went to sea, since if life on a privateer was a jolly affair, with not too much discipline and a good prospect of fat prizes, life in the Royal Navy was a hard, thankless business, with a good deal of the first and very little of the second. Still, a pressed man had no choice in the matter, and Jeffery found himself booked for a voyage to the West Indies in the *Recruit*.

He had not been many days aboard before he stepped into serious trouble. 'One day,' he tells us, with admirable candour, 'unfortunately passing the gunner's room, I fell into a temptation which was the cause of all my following misfortunes; in short, seeing a bottle of rum, I took it up, and ere I had scarcely tasted the liquor a midshipman, Mr. Graham, saw me and reported me to the captain, for which offence I was put in irons for two days and nights, and received two dozen lashes.'

The punishment, which to us may seem pretty heavy for so trivial an offence, by contemporary standards was by no means unduly severe. Unfortunately, it did not serve to teach Jeffery to keep his hands off other people's liquor. A few days later, the weather being very hot and he being thirsty, he drank about two quarts of

spruce beer from a cask belonging to the midshipmen. This time, at any rate, he had his drink ; but, unluckily for him, someone saw him at it and reported him. He was again brought before the captain, was charged with the offence, and confessed his guilt. Some days passed, and much to his surprise, he heard no more of the matter ; but he was greatly mistaken if he imagined that he was going to escape scot free.

On the following Sunday evening, when the *Recruit* was passing the desolate and rocky islet of Sombrero, on the outskirts of the Leeward Islands, Captain Lake suddenly gave orders to heave-to the brig. Then he sent for Jeffery and told him that he proposed to put him ashore and leave him on the island, and that he must make ready to go off at once. So saying, he ordered the jolly-boat to be lowered and manned. Jeffery, overcome though he was by surprise and alarm, had the presence of mind to put a few poor belongings together in a bundle ; but when he reappeared on deck with it the captain refused to allow him to take it with him : he was to go ashore just as he was, with nothing but the clothes he was wearing.

So strict was the discipline of the Navy that no one seems to have thought of questioning—much less of disputing—the captain's extraordinary and quite illegal orders. Probably the other officers thought that the whole business had been planned in order to give the young thief a good fright ;

that he would not really be left on the rock ; or that if he was he would quickly be taken off again. If they thought that they were wrong.

It was nearing dusk when the boat reached the rock and put the unfortunate youth ashore. The lieutenant and the midshipman who had charge of him, as well as the boat's crew, appear to have had no liking for their job, and to have felt very sorry for the boy. When he pointed out to the lieutenant that he had no shoes with him, the officer borrowed a pair from one of the crew ; both he and the midshipman presented him with a handkerchief, presumably to be used as a flag to attract the attention of passing vessels ; and one of the crew gave the boy his knife. Before pushing off the lieutenant told him to ' keep a sharp look-out for ships that pass.'

So they left him, turning of necessity a deaf ear to his pitiful cries. Jeffery stood on the shore in the waning light, the tears streaming down his face, watching the boat as it receded and the splash of the oars grew fainter and fainter at every moment. Presently darkness fell. He was alone and desperately frightened. He had no food, no water, nothing but his clothes, his borrowed shoes, his two handkerchiefs and the knife. He spent the night on the shore, longing for morning, hoping that Captain Lake would then relent and send a boat for him. And when morning came he thought at first that this would happen, for he could still see the *Recruit* in the

offing. But instead of approaching the rock she drew away from it ; soon she was hull down on the horizon ; and then she disappeared.

Poor Jeffery was stunned by the truth that forced itself upon him : Captain Lake was not going to take him off the rock. All day he wandered hopelessly about the shore, occasionally flinging himself on the ground in despair. He became very thirsty, and it did not take him long to discover that there was no fresh water to be had. During the next night and the following day the pangs grew till they were almost intolerable. He tells us that at last he drank sea-water ; but he cannot have taken much or he could scarcely have survived. On the third day there was a fall of rain, and he drank greedily of the water which collected in the hollows and crannies of the rocks. His thirst quenched, he found that he was ravenously hungry. There was no vegetation worth mentioning on the island. There was no living creature to be seen, save the seagulls which he had no means of catching, and a revolting species of black lizard that crawled across his face at night. When on the fourth day he discovered a small piece of bark, he devoured it like a wild animal.

On the sixth day he was again troubled by thirst, since most of the rainwater had evaporated. His cravings quickened his wits. Collecting the quills of seagulls, he made them into drinking-straws and sucked up the water from the deeper

crevices in the rocks where it still lay. On the same day he saw two ships passing the island at a great distance, but naturally they did not notice such small signals as he was able to make. On the following day another ship came quite close in, but once more he was unable to attract attention. During the nine days of his stay on Sombrero Jeffrey had nothing to eat except that one little bit of bark; and, though the heavy dews that fell at night and the water he was able to obtain through his quills kept him from perishing of thirst, he suffered much through the long, hot hours of sunshine.

On the ninth day another ship appeared, sailing close inshore. This time Jeffery was successful in disclosing his presence, and the ship saw him and sent in a boat to take him off; none too soon, for after all that he had endured he was a pitiable object, parched with thirst, starved and wholly exhausted. His rescuer was the American schooner the *Adams*, commanded by Captain John Dennis, and sailing from Martinique to Marblehead. When Jeffery told his story the honest Yankees were full of indignation at the horrible treatment he had received. 'They one and all,' he wrote, 'wished the captain might have the same punishment for his cruelty.'

For a few days his stomach could not retain any nourishment, until someone thought of giving him oranges to eat. On this diet he soon recovered, and 'in little more than a week I was



able to eat more than any one man in the ship.'

Captain Dennis took the lad to Marblehead, where the story of his sufferings excited more indignation and such practical sympathy that Jeffery resolved to stay in so hospitable a neighbourhood. He remained there for about two years, taking a series of odd jobs under different employers; but neither from his own account nor from other sources do we learn whether these frequent changes meant a return of his old weakness.

Let us go back to that old-fashioned martinet, Captain Lake, who, when we last saw him, was calmly taking his ship on to port, just as though he had not left one of his ratings on a barren rock in the Leeward Islands. He reached Barbadoes, and there found—perhaps to his surprise—that he had got to account for Jeffery. The boy was on the *Recruit's* roll; what had happened to him? Captain Lake was forced to explain to Admiral Cochrane, who was commanding at Barbadoes, that Jeffrey was not in the ship and that he had not deserted, but that he had been marooned. And, as marooning was not a recognised form of punishment in the Royal Navy, there was at once a big fuss. The Admiral held an enquiry, and ordered the *Recruit* back to Sombrero to retrieve her missing rating. But when a much-chastened captain arrived at the rock there was no trace of Jeffery to be found. He had disappeared. As we know, he had been

picked up a few days before by the *Adams*, but, for all the naval authorities at Barbadoes could tell, anything might have happened to him.

That was the end of Captain Lake's career. Even in those days, before the art of the Parliamentary question had become as developed as it is now, and when the liberty of the subject was, comparatively speaking, no great matter, a captain in the Royal Navy was not allowed to maroon his undesirables with impunity. Lake was court-martialled and dismissed the Service; and if there had been any specific evidence of Jeffery's death, the consequences would have been still more serious. As it was, a lot of people thought he had got off rather lightly in escaping a prosecution for manslaughter.

So the matter was left, and, curiously enough to modern ways of thinking, no real attempt appears to have been made to discover Jeffery's fate. Several stories purporting to give it were in circulation, and an occasional growl was heard in the House of Commons; but it was generally believed that he was dead.

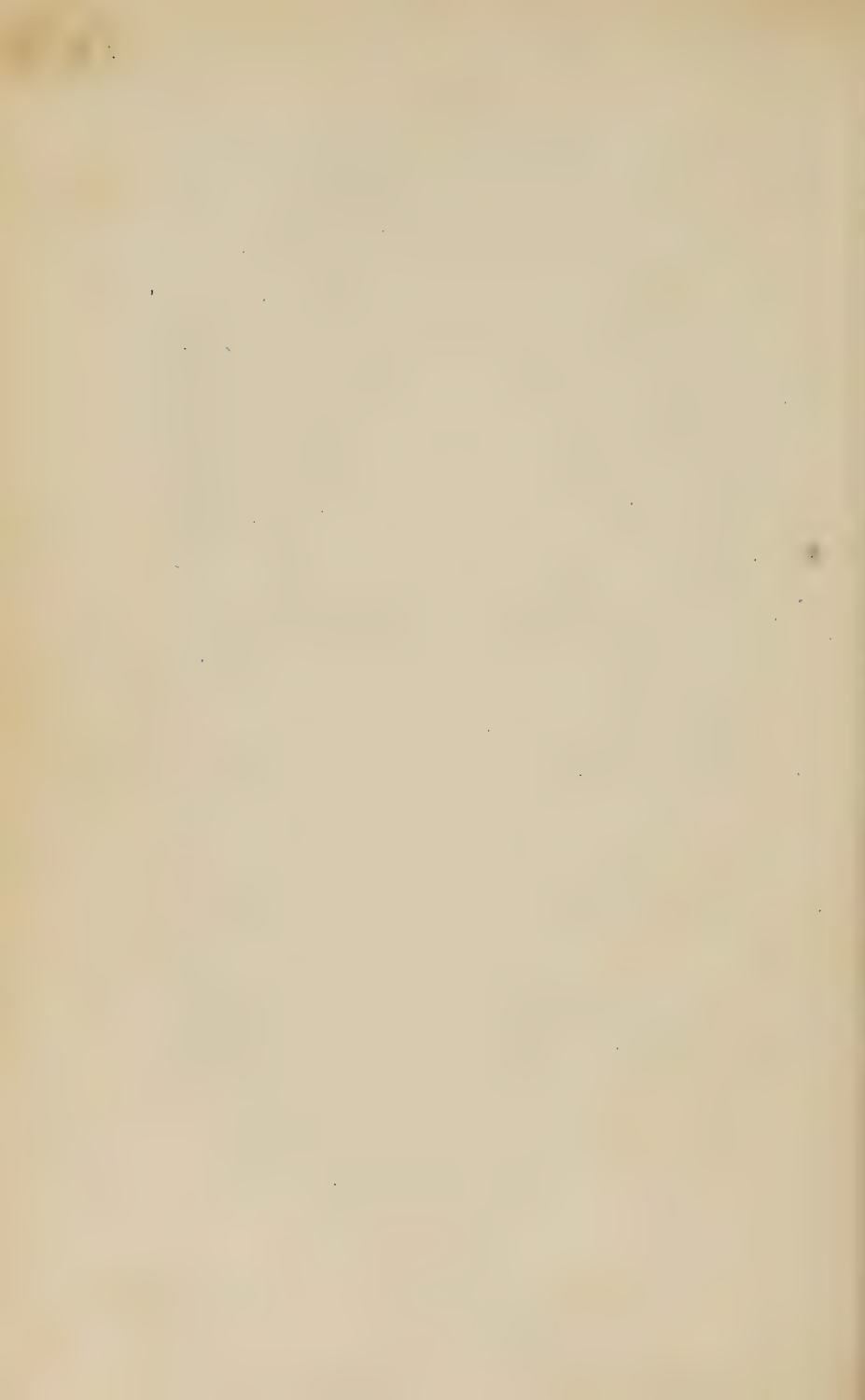
Two years passed before Jeffery, serenely ignorant of the ructions which his story had stirred up, took the trouble to write to his parents to tell them that he was still alive. Even so, his letter only reached England about the same time as an affidavit, sworn by him before an American magistrate, found its way into the London papers. Then the official wheels began

to revolve. Jeffery was summoned and appeared before the British Consul at Boston ; and, on advice that it would be to his advantage to return home, allowed himself to be conveyed to England in H.M.S. *Thistle*. On arrival he first visited his home ; and there, in due course, an elderly gentleman appeared with a paper, which he asked him to sign in return for the sum of £600. The gentleman was Captain Lake's legal representative, and the paper was an undertaking not to prosecute that officer. Six hundred pound seemed a lot of money to Jeffery ; and he signed and was paid. Afterwards he regretted his hastiness, and was inclined to claim that various verbal promises, which had not been carried out, had been made to him as well. However, he got no more out of Captain Lake, and, as he also received a handsome sum on account of arrears of pay from the Admiralty, he did not do so badly out of the business.

With a certain school of naval officers marooning seems to have been rather a favourite penalty. They persisted in the practice despite discouragement, and only relinquished it when its dangers—to themselves—became too marked to escape their notice. Such a one was Captain Rolls, of H.M.S. *Lion*, who, while in China waters, conceived a great dislike for one of his midshipmen, Mr. Daly. He afterwards explained that Daly had 'conducted himself improperly towards his superior officers,' a more serious

offence than Jeffery's illicit drink of spruce beer. Nowadays, it is rumoured, the Navy has an effective way of its own of dealing with 'snotties' who are lacking in respect towards their seniors, but Captain Rolls favoured sterner methods. He marooned the disrespectful Mr. Daly on Lin Tin, an uninhabited island off the coast of China. More humane than Captain Lake, he allowed the youth to take with him a fowling-piece, some powder and plenty of provisions. Probably Daly quite enjoyed himself, and perhaps the experience did him good. He was taken off after a short stay, and returned home in an Indiaman. The laugh remained with him, for he then instituted proceedings against his late commander in the civil courts, and obtained £450 damages.

Probably there were many other instances—recorded and unrecorded—of autocratic conduct on the high seas, but less was thought of such lapses in a more heroic age. There is, for example, the legend of the peppery commander who fell out with one of his lieutenants and confined him in a hen-coop for the remainder of the voyage. To-day these stories are no more than pleasing memories, though doubtless many a captain in his heart of hearts regrets the passing of the old days and the old ways.





THE STORY OF THE 'GROSVENOR'



## THE STORY OF THE 'GROSVENOR'

### I

THE *Grosvenor*, a fine East Indiaman of 800 tons burden, left the port of Trincomalee, in Ceylon, on June 13th, 1782, bound for England by way of the Cape of Good Hope. She was carrying some twenty passengers, with their native servants; a ship's company of sixty Europeans, with a number of lascars; and a cargo of great value, about which more will be heard later. As she drew near to the coast of Africa she ran into very bad weather, but though it was blowing a gale, and heavy seas were running, there was no apparent cause for anxiety. On the evening of August 3rd Captain Coxon told some of the passengers over the dinner-table that they were then about a hundred leagues from the nearest land. The event was to prove him wrong. Probably the stormy weather had prevented any observations being taken during the two preceding days, and perhaps due allowance had not been made for the action of the currents, which are particularly strong and variable in those waters; at any rate, the *Grosvenor* was a great deal nearer land than anybody on board suspected.

Early on the morning of Sunday, the 4th, the gale still continuing, the ship was lying-to under a foresail and mizzen-stay-sail; and at four o'clock several of the crew were ordered aloft to strike and send down the foretop-gallant-mast. Among these men was one John Hynes, whose story of the disaster that followed, as told by him to the Dutch Governor at the Cape, was taken down by Mr. George Carter and subsequently published.<sup>1</sup> He gives a dramatic account of the shipwreck.

'John Hynes, a seaman, was at this time aloft with one Lewis and several others, striking and sending down the foretop-gallant-mast. Whilst there, Hynes asked Lewis if he did not think that it was land where the breakers appeared; to which the latter answering in the affirmative, they all hastened down to inform the third mate, whose watch it was, of so alarming a circumstance.

'Instead of paying any attention to their information, Mr. Beale only laughed at their want of knowledge, and gave not the least credit to their conjecture. Upon which, Lewis ran into the cabin and acquainted the captain, who instantly came out and ordered to wear ship. The helm was accordingly put hard a-weather, the mizzen-stay-sail hauled down, the foretop-sail and jib loosed, and the after-yards squared; by which her head was nearly brought

<sup>1</sup> Carter: *The Loss of the 'Grosvenor,' East Indiaman.*

round. But before this could be accomplished, her keel struck ; and as she thumped very hard, every soul on board ran immediately upon deck.

'Horror and apprehension were now strongly painted in every face ; which the captain endeavoured to dispel by every means in his power. In order to pacify the passengers he assured them that he was not without hope of being able to save them all, and therefore begged them to be composed.

'In the first place he ordered the carpenter to sound the pumps. This was done ; but no water was to be found in the hold ; the stern lying high on the rocks and the fore part being considerably lower, all the water had run forward.

'About ten minutes after the ship had struck, the wind came off shore, a circumstance that gave additional strength to their apprehensions ; for they now were afraid they would be driven out to sea, and thereby lose the only chance they had of avoiding that death which seemed to await them.

'The gunner was ordered by the captain to fire signal guns of distress ; but upon his attempting to go into the powder room, he found it so full of water as to prevent all access into it. The captain was no sooner informed of this circumstance than he ordered the main-mast to be cut away ; and presently after, the fore-mast ; but without any effect. And the ship



being within a cable's length, or about three hundred yards, of the shore, all hopes of saving her were at an end.'

By ill-fortune the *Grosvenor* had struck at a most unfavourable spot. It was at Laambas, in what is now known as Pondoland; between Port St. John and Port Shepstone; a wild stretch of coast, guarded by savage rocks against which the great breakers of the Indian Ocean thundered without respite. Even on a calm day a ship would have fared badly in the turmoil of the surf, and on this August morning, when a big sea was running, it was patent that the *Grosvenor* would soon be ground to pieces between breaker and rock.

The ship at any rate was doomed; nor was the prospect much brighter for passengers and crew. The yawl and the jolly-boat were lowered, but in a moment were dashed to pieces in the surf. Some of the men then set to work to build a rough raft, which they secured by a nine-inch hawser. It was lowered over the side, and four men jumped on to it; but almost at once the hawser snapped like pack-thread, the raft was caught up by the waves, flung shorewards and smashed into fragments; and three out of the four men were drowned.

Meanwhile a gallant attempt was being made by a lascar and two Italians to swim ashore with a life-line, to which a stout rope had been attached. One of the Italians perished, but the other two



THE WRECK OF THE 'GROSVENOR',  
(From an old print)



men struggled through the surf to the land. Here they found a crowd of natives already collected, who, so far from showing any hostility, lent them a hand in securing the hawser to some rocks. Now at least there was a way—perilous and difficult indeed, but still possible—by which the more active might gain the shore.

There was no time to be lost. Scarcely had the hawser been fixed than the *Grosvenor* broke in two, and the bows, veering round, came athwart the stern. Thereupon several of the crew, more nimble or more courageous than their comrades, began to swarm down the hawser; but, while a few reached the shore, some fifteen men fell into the sea and were drowned. All the passengers and most of the crew, however, stayed on the poop, where they clung, huddled together, waiting for death or some miracle to save them. And the miracle happened.

It will be remembered that shortly after the ship struck the wind shifted and blew off-shore, much to the consternation of all on board; for there was the additional danger that the two broken fragments of the ship might now be flung back into deeper water, where they would immediately sink. Suddenly, however, when hope of escape had almost fled, the wind shifted back to its old quarter and blew directly upon the land.

The wreck, rapidly breaking up, was driven shorewards until it was caught and held in a

cleft between two rocks ; while (and here was the miracle) the starboard quarter, on which the people were collected, becoming detached from the rest of the ship, actually floated, a fine natural raft, into shoal water close to the shore. Thus, by what appeared at the time to be an amazing piece of good fortune, every soul aboard, with one exception, reached land in safety. The exception was the cook's mate, a native, who, being drunk, refused to join the others on the starboard quarter, and was drowned.

After so providential an escape it might have been hoped that the worst was over. But, as events proved, experiences far more terrible than any shipwreck lay in front of the wretched survivors. In those days the European settlement nearest to the site of the wreck was the Dutch colony at the Cape, and this Captain Coxon quite rightly resolved to reach. Although he had only a hazy idea of the actual distance, he reckoned that the journey overland would take fifteen or sixteen days, an estimate which took no account of the fearful country to be crossed or of the presence of several broad rivers, most formidable obstacles for ill-equipped travellers. Doubtless, had Captain Coxon known the real difficulties of the trek south, he would have chosen rather to build boats or rafts out of the wreckage, and to try to reach the Cape by sea.

There was, to be sure, one point which seemed to favour the captain's decision. The natives, so



far, had not been unfriendly. Perhaps they were too busy at first collecting the iron—to them the most precious of metals—that was being washed ashore with the wreckage to trouble much about the strangers. Moreover, when darkness fell and they went off with their spoil, they left the embers of their fire burning, so that the shivering folk on the shore were able to warm themselves, and even to cook themselves a meal, the last worthy of the name that most of them were to enjoy.

When they had eaten they scattered along the beach to retrieve such stores and livestock as had been washed up : a few hogs, geese and fowls, a cask of pork, two casks of flour, and two puncheons of rum, which were destroyed lest they should fall into the hands of the natives. It was truly a meagre provision to sustain one hundred and thirty-five persons during the journey before them.

Early the next morning the natives came down to the shore in crowds, but, though they took what they pleased from the stores that lay scattered about, they were not unfriendly so long as they were not molested.

Captain Coxon then called a meeting of the company. He explained the course that he suggested, and added that while his authority had lapsed when the ship was wrecked he was ready to continue in command. The others agreed to both proposals, and in a very short time the party was ready to start. One man,

O'Brien, who had an injured knee, chose to remain behind, hoping to make friends with the natives and to live with them until he was able to march. The chief mate, Mr. Logie, who was ill, was put in a hammock slung upon a pole and carried by two of the men.

Directly the column began to move off the natives turned their attention to it, following it for about three miles, robbing the travellers of any objects that took their fancy, and occasionally throwing stones at them.

They had not gone very far when they fell in with another band of Kaffirs, whose hair, we are told, was dressed in the shape of sugar-loaves, and whose faces were painted red. These newcomers were more friendly; and with them was a half-caste called Trout, who could speak Dutch. We can imagine the delight with which the English welcomed him; but they were to be cruelly disappointed. For when they offered him a large sum of money to guide the party to the Cape he refused, explaining quite frankly that he had committed several murders, for which he was wanted by the Dutch authorities, and that in any case the natives found him too useful to allow him to leave them. Moreover, he told Captain Coxon that his plan was almost impossible to carry out, for in order to reach the nearest Dutch settlement it would be necessary to cross a great stretch of barren country, intersected by wide rivers and infested by wild beasts.

However, it was thought too late to turn back, and, greatly depressed, the party trudged on again. For some days they struggled forward in some sort of order; but the natives clung to them like leeches, and the English, being unarmed, could do little to stop their thieving. On one occasion there was quite a hot skirmish, but the odds were too great and the white folk were glad to end it with a truce. After that they tried to buy off their persecutors with presents of buttons and trinkets; but the more they gave the greedier the natives became. They stole the men's watches and the ladies' jewels, and finally—which was worse—the only tinder-box the party possessed. Thereafter they were forced to carry lighted firebrands on the march. At night, when the natives drew off and gave them a little peace, they were kept awake by the wild beasts that came prowling round in search of a meal.

After a while, under the strain of the trek, the discipline began to weaken. The women, children and sick were unable to keep up with the men, and frequent halts were necessary. Many of the seamen murmured at the slow rate of progress, and at last forty-three of the crew, including our chronicler John Hynes, announced their intention of pushing on ahead, leaving the officers, the passengers and a few of the sailors to follow at their own pace. The separation was made without ill-feeling on either side, and, as a matter of fact, for several days the two parties travelled

more or less together. At length, however, they reached the kraal where the half-caste Trout lived, who then warned them that in order to avoid provoking the natives they should travel in smaller parties. So they separated, never to meet again.

Not a single one of those who stayed with the rear party ever reached civilisation. For years their fate was unknown, though rumours and stories trickled through to the Dutch settlements. In quite recent times distinct traces of white ancestry were found among natives living on the banks of the Ibisi River; and it has been conjectured these may be descendants in the third or fourth generation of some of the European women who sailed in the *Grosvenor*, and not, as was at first supposed, a remnant of the lost tribes of Israel.

Let us, however, follow—in the account of John Hynes—the fortunes of what was known as the sailors' party. In the course of their terrible march they kept, as far as was possible, to the shore, where they might pick up mussels, oysters and other shellfish. But from time to time they would strike a river too wide to be crossed at the mouth, so that they were forced to turn inland and march up the banks of the stream, until it narrowed enough for them to swim it, or to paddle themselves over in frail, improvised rafts. They were robbed by almost every party of natives they met, until they had nothing left

worth taking. At night and even by day they were continually molested by wild beasts ; and once they walked into a herd of elephants, and only escaped destruction by making a wide *détour*.

Daily they grew weaker for want of proper food. Twice they were lucky enough to find a dead whale on the shore ; once they induced the natives to give them a young bullock in exchange for some buttons ; and once they found a dead shark, but it was in such an advanced state of decay that 'the liver only could be eaten.'

It is to their credit that they did not allow their fearful hardships to kill their sense of comradeship and humanity. One of the most pathetic incidents of the march is the story of John Law, a child of seven or eight years, who was among the passengers of the *Grosvenor*. Both his parents were dead, and when the two parties separated he ran, crying, after one of the men in the advance detachment. The sailors agreed to take him with them, and to carry him by turns when he was too tired to walk. One man in particular took charge of him and saw that he had enough to eat ; but soon this good fellow, tormented by hunger, ate some poisonous berries and died. The steward then declared he would look after the boy, and, though the child must have been a sore hindrance to the party, no one would hear of leaving him behind.



So he went on with them, and sometimes, when they themselves were faint with hunger, they would beg a little milk for him from the Kaffir women. A day came, however, when both the steward and John Law were taken ill and could no longer march. Yet the others could not find it in their hearts to leave them, and, halting, resolved to spend the night where they were. The next morning they set about preparing a miserable meal, leaving the child to sleep on until it was ready. But when they came to wake him he was dead. So distressed was the good steward at the loss of his little charge that his companions had great difficulty in persuading him to leave the body and go on with them.

Long before this sad little incident the company had begun to break up. One of the first to fall out was the leader, Captain Talbot, who sank down exhausted by the wayside; when the others moved on his faithful servant stayed with him, and neither was heard of again.

At last the party of forty-three was reduced to three men—John Hynes, Evans and Wormington. They were crossing a country where water was very scarce, and at one time so intolerable did their thirst become that Wormington suggested drawing lots: the loser was to die, and the other two were to drink his blood. The other two, however, refused this grisly suggestion, and presently Wormington fell down on the shore, and they left him. A little later they

fell in with four more of the party who had dropped behind, and the six men, half-blind and delirious, staggered feebly on together. Their sufferings, however, were nearly at an end.

On the 117th day of their journey, four months after the shipwreck, one of the six survivors, a youth called Price, was wandering a little way from the others in search of wood when he saw close by two white men with guns. So startled was he by the unwonted sight of Europeans that he ran back to the fire. The strangers followed him. One of them was a Portuguese, the other an Italian, and they came from a Dutch settlement near at hand.

So far gone were the wretched survivors that at first they could not realise that their terrible journey was ended. When the two strangers found them they were cutting chunks of flesh off a dead whale, and were with difficulty persuaded to throw these disgusting morsels away. But as the truth dawned on them their agitation and excitement were pitiful. 'One man laughed,' said Hynes; 'another cried, and another danced.'

They were taken to the house of Mynheer Christopher Roostoff, a hospitable Boer, who plied them so heartily with food that they nearly died of over-eating.

Although Britain and Holland were at war, when the Dutch Governor at the Cape learnt of the arrival of the survivors of the *Grosvenor*

he at once sent out an expedition to search for and bring in stragglers. The rescue party, consisting of a hundred Europeans and three hundred Hottentots, despite the difficulties of the country, the scarcity of transport and the hostility of the natives, penetrated some distance up the coast, and fell in with three white men, seven lascars and two 'black' women (probably ayahs). With these they returned to the colony, which they reached after an absence of three months.

As we have seen, it is not definitely known what became of the other unfortunates from the *Grosvenor*. Most of them, without a doubt, perished on the march; but, if we are to credit certain reports, not all. A French traveller, Vaillant by name, who visited Kaffraria a little later, was told by the natives that while most of the white men from the shipwreck had been killed, the women had been spared, and were living in native kraals. He believed that a few of the men also had escaped and were still at large in the bush, or were wandering along the coast. Vaillant was anxious to try to rescue these survivors, but was assured by the natives that he would never succeed in traversing the difficult country or in crossing the wide rivers which lay between him and them. He therefore reluctantly gave up the project.

Seven years after the shipwreck Colonel Gordon, while travelling in Kaffraria, was told by a native that among his countrymen in his distant home

there was a white woman, with a child whom she frequently embraced with tears. Ill-health compelled the Colonel to return home before he could test the truth of this tale; but before he left he wrote the woman a letter in English, French and Dutch, in which he asked her to send back some token, such as a burnt stick, to show that she still lived; promising that on its arrival every effort would be made to rescue her. Nothing, however, came back, and the mystery remained unsolved. For many years it was believed at the Cape that some of the unfortunate ladies from the *Grosvenor* had survived; that they might even have returned to civilisation; but that, having married and perhaps borne children to Kaffirs, they preferred to stay where they were.

## II

The melancholy story of the *Grosvenor* does not end with the arrival in the Dutch colony of the eighteen survivors. There has been a most interesting sequel.

We have already mentioned that the Indiaman was bringing home a valuable cargo. In fact, the records show<sup>1</sup> that she had on board precious stones, specie, bullion, ivory and other treasures to the value of over two millions sterling. The jewels, packed in nineteen boxes, alone were

<sup>1</sup> *Chambers' Journal*, January, 1924.

worth £517,000 ; the gold bars, 720 in number, £420,000 ; while specie to the value of £717,000 was stored in the lazarette.

But perhaps this was not all the treasure.

Within the walls of the great fort of Delhi lie the sumptuous buildings of the ancient palace of the Moguls. The visitor, entering, passes through a porch of red stone and along a paved walk, which leads him, between pleasant gardens, to the Diwan-i-Am, or Hall of Public Audience, Here, where in the old days the rulers of India held their splendid court, he will pause to admire the magnificent dais of marble and alabaster, richly carved and decorated, with its background of beautiful inlaid work. But his guide, if he has one, will assure him that the wonders of that hall to-day are as nothing compared with its wonders in the days of the Moguls. For on that empty dais once rested the Peacock Throne, famed for its peerless beauty and its fabulous worth from the coasts of China to those of Spain. It was shaped, we are told, like a bed, four feet square, and supported by four golden legs, some twenty to twenty-five inches high. Over the throne was spread a canopy, sustained by twelve columns, each of which was adorned with splendid pearls ; and the bars above the legs were ablaze with rubies and emeralds, pearls and diamonds. Behind the throne, and giving to it its name, were two peacocks with tails outspread, wrought of gold and encrusted



with precious stones to represent the natural colours of the bird. Such were the marvels of the Peacock Throne; and we may add that Tavernier, the French jeweller, who saw it in 1665, estimated its total value at six million pounds.

The fate of this colossal treasure has always been rather a mystery. In 1739 Nadir Shah swooped down from the north-west and captured Delhi. His fierce soldiers overran the fort and the palace, plundering everything on which they could lay their hands, and even picking many of the stones—of comparatively little worth—out of the inlaid work on the walls. When the invaders returned to Persia they carried the Peacock Throne with them. Its future history has never been properly established. According to one report, it lay for a great many years in the treasure-house of the Shahs, but it certainly is not there now. According to another story, it was broken up. But—and here the *Grosvenor* comes into the tale again—there was also a persistent rumour that when that ill-fated India-man sailed from Trincomalee in 1782 she carried in her hold a large package, the contents of which were kept secret; and that this package contained no less a treasure than the two golden peacocks that once stood behind the throne of the Moguls in the Hall of Public Audience at Delhi.

Such things, of course, did happen. In the

old days of the Company jewels and other treasures, bought, stolen or acquired by one means or another, were often smuggled home from India by the Company's servants; and, as the peacocks have not been traced anywhere else, it is just possible that the tradition is true and that they may be lying to-day under the surf and silt of the African coast, in the rotting hold of the *Grosvenor*.

Be the report true or false, plenty of attempts have been made to salvage the wreck, which even if the golden peacocks did not form part of her cargo, undoubtedly held treasure of immense value. But the task, comparatively simple at first sight, has proved to be one of extraordinary difficulty. In the first place, the ship went ashore at one of the worst points on the coast of Africa, where savage rocks and giant breakers wage a never-ending war. Even in calm weather a boat will find it hard to draw in close to the shore without being caught in the surf and dashed to pieces; and off that coast a calm day is the exception, not the rule. If the *Grosvenor* had sunk farther out it would have been fairly easy for the divers to work; if she had been carried a little nearer inshore she would probably have broken up at once, and her treasures have been scattered. As it was, she was gripped and held in a cleft of the rocks some thirty yards out—just close enough in to be tantalising, just far enough out to be

inaccessible. Her curious position has kept her from falling to pieces; she has merely sunk deeper in that cleft; and there she lies to-day, hidden from view, buried beneath the sand which the tides of one hundred and forty-three years have driven over her, almost as immovable as the rocks that imprison her.

The first attempt to salve her treasure was undertaken by the Admiralty a year after the shipwreck, but failed before difficulties with which the equipment of those early days was quite unable to cope.

Other attempts, equally unsuccessful, followed, culminating in the enterprise of the *Grosvenor* Recovery Syndicate in 1905. The syndicate's first task was to locate the sunken hull, and after working systematically for several weeks, the divers were about to abandon the search in despair when one of them, almost by accident, found himself standing directly above the wreck. Probing through the sand with a long shank, he reached timber in several places, and a little further investigation made it clear that he had struck the buried hull. The dredger *Duiker* was then hired from the Table Bay Harbour Board, and brought up to clear away the sand from over the wreck. But again that treacherous coast outwitted the treasure-hunters. The weather was suitable for their operations during two months of the year only, and before the work was very far advanced there was a heavy influx of

sand all along the coast, the wreck was again buried, and the draught of water was so reduced that the dredger was unable to approach near enough for her pumps to be worked. By this time the syndicate's money was running short, so the work was perforce and very reluctantly given up. Nevertheless, although it had failed in its main object, it had achieved some important results: it had salvaged a number of gold and silver coins; some oddments such as a silver brooch, a silver wine decanter label (with 'Madeira' engraved on it), a shoebuckle; and no fewer than fifteen of the ship's guns. Also—though this was a point more encouraging for future treasure-seekers than comforting for the syndicate—it had established, almost beyond question, that under the sand the holds and the strong-room of the *Grosvenor* lay almost intact, with the mighty treasure they were believed to contain.

During the war the wreck lay unheeded; but in 1921 a new company, known as the *Grosvenor* Bullion Syndicate, was formed and took up the search. It is at work to-day, and before these lines appear in print the results may be made public. Mr. Chapman, the engineer-in-charge, is trying a most original and interesting plan. Every previous attempt to reach the wreck has been made from the surface, and has been baffled by the storminess of the seas, the rugged formation of the coast, and the treacherous currents,

which are liable at any moment to pile up new sandbanks and so destroy the labour of months. The Bullion Syndicate is working on completely different lines. It has rejected as impracticable, if not impossible, the ordinary salvage methods; it is using neither dredgers nor divers, but is proposing to reach the wreck from the land. In other words, it is engaged in driving a tunnel, one hundred and fifty yards long, from the shore to the cleft in the rocks where the *Grosvenor* lies. The tunnel is six feet high by five feet wide, and is being drilled through solid rock, so that there should be no leakage of sand or water. It is believed that the sand in the immediate neighbourhood of the hull has by this time solidified, and that the wreck will be found encased in a covering of natural cement. As the tunnel draws near its objective this outer coating will be reached—and pierced—and then the treasure-seekers will—perhaps—break into the hoard that has lain hidden beneath the sand for nearly a century and a half.





THE ADVENTURES OF MARY ANN TALBOT



## THE ADVENTURES OF MARY ANN TALBOT

MARY ANN TALBOT, if we may accept her own account<sup>1</sup> of her birth, was the youngest of sixteen natural children born to Lord William Talbot by a lady who died while Mary was still an infant, and whose name she never succeeded in discovering.

As a child Mary was brought up at the village of Worthen, twelve miles from Shrewsbury, in the care of her nurse ; and on the latter's death she was sent, at the early age of five, to Mrs. Tapperly's boarding-school in Chester. Here she remained until she was fourteen, under the protection and supervision of a Mrs. Wilson, whom she believed at first to be her mother, but who she afterwards discovered was her own elder sister.

When Mrs. Wilson died Mary was placed—apparently by instructions contained in her late father's will—in the guardianship of a certain Mr. Sucker, of Newport, a gentleman who appears to have had sound financial reasons—presumably

<sup>1</sup>*The Life and Surprising Adventures of Mary Ann Talbot* was published in 1809 by Mr. Kirby of Paternoster Row. The book is an autobiography, although we may perhaps question how much of it should be credited to Miss Talbot, and how much to the editing of Mr. Kirby. It is a racy account of an amazing career, and well repays reading. The main facts of the narrative are undoubtedly true, though some of the incidents are probably exaggerated. So far as possible I have left Mary to tell her own story.

also connected with Lord William's will—for ridding himself as speedily as possible of his ward. Further, he had—to put it mildly—a very indifferent sense of his responsibilities. Mary had not been long with him when he introduced her to a Captain Essex Bowen, of the 82nd Regiment of Foot, who took such an interest in the girl—now fifteen years of age—that he asked for her to be transferred to his charge. Mr. Sucker was only too ready to accede to this request, and, sending for Mary, explained to her that Captain Bowen was to be her guardian in future, and as such was to be obeyed in every respect.

So it was arranged. The new guardian had his own peculiar conception of his duties. He told his ward that he proposed taking her with him to London, where she was to complete her education in the care of a 'female friend'; and Mary, in her innocence, was delighted at the prospect. On arriving in London, however, she was soon disillusioned. Captain Bowen at once showed his true colours, and the unfortunate girl, without a friend or protector in the world, fell completely into his power.

But worse was to follow.

'It was not long,' Mary tells us, 'before I was destined to become the object of still greater degradation. In consequence of an order from the regiment to which Captain Bowen belonged,





MARY ANNE TALBOT,

*Who served Several Years*

*In His Majesty's Service by Sea & Land*

*In the Name of*

JOHN TAYLOR,

Died Feb<sup>y</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> 1808, Aged 30

*W<sup>as</sup> June 16. 1809 by R. S. Kirby London House Yard Paternoster Row.*

MARY ANN TALBOT

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he was obliged to embark for San Domingo ; and, conceiving me properly subjugated to his purpose, and remarking that my figure was extremely well calculated for the situation he had projected for me, he produced a complete set of male attire, and for the first time made me acquainted with the unmanly design he had formed of taking me with him to the West Indies in the menial capacity of his footboy.'

She was, in short, to be his batman (to the public eye) ; and to suit the part he bestowed on her the name of John Taylor.

'Thus equipped, I travelled with him to Falmouth, where, soon after our arrival, we embarked on board the *Crown* transport, Captain Bishop, and set sail for the West Indies on the 20th day of March, 1792. We had not been long on our voyage before I began to experience the hardships of my situation. A ship, even to the most robust and daring of the male sex, is at first a very unpleasant dwelling, and it must naturally be supposed that to one like myself it was particularly disagreeable, as the novelty of my new attire did not exempt me from being compelled to live and mess with the lowest of the ship's company, for Captain Bowen never suffered me once after I was on board to eat with him, but forced me to put up with what he left at his meals.

‘ Fearful of incurring the raillery which detection would have occasioned, I resolved to endure the hardships which I suffered with patience, rather than discover my sex.

‘ During our voyage we encountered a most tremendous gale, which continued several days with such fury that we were obliged to throw our guns overboard in order to lighten the ship, and were reduced to such distress as to render it necessary for the pumps to be kept at work continually; in consequence of which every person without distinction (officers excepted) was obliged to assist in the laborious office. It was in this extremity that I first learnt the duty of a sailor, being obliged on some necessary occasion to go aloft, which frequent use rendered at last familiar and by no means irksome.

‘ In addition to our affliction the storm had driven us considerably out of our latitude. Having in our eagerness to lighten the ship thrown overboard, besides the guns, casks of water, bags of biscuit, and many articles of indispensable necessity to our future comfort, which we afterwards severely missed, we were compelled to put ourselves on the short allowance of a biscuit per day; and for water we were so much distressed as to be wholly without it for the space of eight days, during which period we were happy, in consequence of some favourable showers, to wring the rainwater from our watch-coats, which, on such occasions,

we never failed to hang out, in order to catch as much as possible. . . .

‘As if the measure of our troubles were not yet accomplished, our maintop-gallant-mast was broken asunder, and swept into the sea four men busily engaged at the windlass for our preservation, whom we never saw more.’

At length, however, the storm abated, and early in June the ship reached Port-au-Prince, in the island of San Domingo.

‘Our stay at San Domingo was but of short duration, owing to the arrival of a packet from England, which had been directed if possible to overtake us, with orders to countermand our destination, and to join the troops on the Continent under the command of His Royal Highness the Duke of York, but had missed us in consequence of the gale before described. I was now doomed to undergo another change of character; for Captain Bowen, judging it not convenient to continue me in the situation of his footboy, proposed my being enrolled in the regiment as a drummer. On my objecting to this he threatened to have me conveyed up the country and sold as a slave. From the dread of his really putting his threat into execution I reluctantly acquiesced in his desire, and was immediately equipped in the dress of a drummer, and learnt the art of beating the drum from the instructions of Drum-major Richardson. In pursuance of



the orders brought by the packet, we immediately embarked on board some transports appointed for that service, and being favoured with a brisk gale during the greatest part of our voyage we arrived in safety at the place of our destination, a port on the coast of Flanders, the name of which I cannot remember. Immediately after our debarkation we were marched off to join the main army at headquarters, previous to reaching which I found I was to answer the purpose of Captain Bowen, as before, in the capacity of his drudge and footboy, whenever opportunity would allow the dispensing of my duty as drummer.'

In this capacity Mary went through the Flanders campaign, meeting with many adventures, and finally taking part in the siege of Valenciennes.

'Towards the end of this memorable siege I received two wounds, though fortunately neither deep nor dangerous: the first from a musket ball, which, glancing between my breast and collarbone, struck my rib, and the other on the small of my back from the broadsword of an Austrian trooper, which, I imagine, rather proceeded from accident than design, the marks of which two wounds I still bear. I carefully concealed them, from the dread of their discovering my sex, and effected a perfect cure by the assistance of a little basilicon, lint and a few Dutch drops.'

At length the town fell, and in the storming of it, much to Mary's relief, her unnatural guardian, Captain Bowen, was killed. She forthwith resolved to escape; but it was no easy undertaking. Her wounds were still troublesome; she could speak no language but her own; she had no knowledge of the country; and, if recaptured, she would be liable as a deserter to a drumhead court martial and a firing file. However, she was not to be deterred by any such objections. She still retained the sailor's attire which she had worn on board ship, and, donning this as a disguise, she started on her journey. She had a hazy idea of reaching Calais or Dunkirk, where she hoped to obtain a passage to England, but so completely did she lose her bearings that she ended up at Luxemburg. Here, being utterly destitute, she gave up her attempt to march to the coast and engaged herself to sail on a French lugger, commanded by a Captain Le Sage.

' Soon afterwards we dropped down the Rhine, and sailed on a cruise, when I was put to the most common drudgery of the vessel; but even this I would have borne with patience had not the painful idea occurred to my mind that in this new situation I should be doomed to raise my arm against my countrymen, which I had learnt to regard was the purpose of Le Sage, whom I had taken for the captain of a merchantman,

but found no other than commander of a kind of privateer. Fortune, however, in this one instance, proved kinder to me than she had hitherto been accustomed. Instead of falling in with some of the English merchantmen, as it was generally thought we should, and according to the ardent wish of Le Sage, our commander, we cruised about four months without any success, or meeting with anything worthy of notice, and then fell in with the British fleet, under the command of Admiral Lord Howe, then in the Channel.

‘On our first sight of the British Le Sage ordered all hands to do their duty ; and, observing me to be missing, he followed me to the place where I was concealed among the ballast, to which I had contrived to gain access through the cabin, for fear of being obliged to act against my country ; and, finding that I persisted in an obstinate refusal to come on deck, he beat me on the back and sides with a rope in the most inhuman manner, and drove me before him up the cabin stairs ; but when on deck I absolutely refused to assist in the defence of his vessel, and he, being too much occupied to think only of me, left me to my own meditations. The British now bore down on us, and after a trifling resistance from the French, through desperation only, we were captured, and I, being considered as an English boy acting against my country, was carried with Le Sage and his companions

before Lord Howe, on board the *Queen Charlotte*, to be examined.'

Mary told Lord Howe as much as she thought it desirable for him to know, but concealed the truth about her sex and the fact that she had deserted from our army in Flanders. Her story was accepted, her presence aboard a French privateer was excused, and she was assigned to the *Brunswick*, commanded by Captain John Harvey, where she served, first as a powder-monkey, and later as a cabin-boy.

She seems by this time to have become quite reconciled to male attire and to male occupations, and to have found life in the British fleet comparatively congenial. While she was in the *Brunswick* she actually took part in the action of The Glorious First of June, of which she has left a vivid account.

'This ship' (the *Brunswick*) 'was chosen by Lord Howe for his second on this occasion, and contributed perhaps more than any other to the glorious result of the day. The instant the signal was made for engaging she bore down, in company with the *Queen Charlotte*, for the centre of the French line, by the galling fire of which the *Brunswick* suffered so severely that her cockpit was filled with wounded before she had fired a single shot.

'The *Vengeur* was the ship to which the *Brunswick* was opposed, and the two antagonists

were laid alongside each other in such a manner that the starboard anchors of the latter hooked into the forechains of the *Vengeur*. The master having informed Captain Harvey of this circumstance, and asked whether he should cut the *Vengeur* clear, "No," replied the gallant captain, "we have got her and we will keep her." So closely were they grappled that the crew of the *Brunswick*, unable to haul off eight of her starboard ports, were obliged to fire through them. Thus hotly engaged, they went off to the distance of a mile from the hostile fleets, and in about an hour, the smoke dispersing a little, our people perceived the *Achille*, another French seventy-four, bearing down upon them with her rigging and decks covered with men ready for boarding. Captain Harvey immediately ordered the lower deck to prepare for her reception. The *Achille* being within musket reach, a double-headed shot was added to each gun, already loaded with single 32-pounders, and a broadside was poured in with most destructive effect, the action with the *Vengeur* being at the same time continued. Five or six rounds brought all the masts of the *Achille* by the board and scattered her crew like mice upon the ocean.

'About an hour after the *Brunswick* had disabled this new assailant, the *Ramillies*, commanded by Captain Harvey's brother, came up to her assistance. After pouring two tremendous broadsides into the *Vengeur*, the *Ramillies* made



sail for another French ship bearing down upon them, and went off engaging her.

‘ Soon after the departure of the *Ramillies* the *Brunswick* swung clear of the *Vengeur*, tearing away three anchors from her bow. A steady raking fire carried the fore and mainmast of the latter by the board, and she had otherwise sustained so much damage that, after a conflict of two hours and a half, she was obliged to yield. All our boats having been shot to pieces, no relief could be afforded by us to our vanquished opponent, which foundered soon after the action. Though every possible exertion was made, only two hundred of the crew were saved ; the rest, in number about six hundred, went to the bottom in the ship.

‘ The *Brunswick* was herself reduced to a perfect wreck, and of her crew forty-seven men were killed, and one hundred and eighteen badly wounded. In this forlorn state it was deemed impossible to rejoin the British fleet, and judged necessary, in order to save the ship, to bear away for port.

‘ During the whole of this engagement, in which I was either actor or spectator, I felt not in the least intimidated. Just before the coming up of the *Ramillies* I received a severe wound above the ankle of my left leg from a grape shot that struck on the aftermost brace of the gun and, rebounding on the deck, lodged in my leg ; notwithstanding which I attempted to rise three

times, but without effect, and in my last effort part of the bone projected through the skin in such a manner as wholly to prevent my standing if I had been able to rise. To complete my misfortune I received another wound by a musket ball that went through my thigh a little above the knee of the same leg, and lay in this crippled state until the engagement was over, every person on board not wounded being too much occupied to yield me the least assistance. I remained in this situation during the rest of the action, but at length was conveyed with many other wounded to the cockpit, where the surgeon, after making me suffer the most excruciating pain, could not extract the grape-shot from above my ankle, so completely was it lodged and surrounded by the swelling which soon took place, and prevented his endeavours, through fear of injuring the tendons, among which he declared that it lay.

‘On the 12th of June we reached Spithead, but the severity of my wounds obliged me to keep close to my berth, and I was thus deprived of the gratification of being hailed with those of my gallant messmates, who on their arrival were greeted with the loudest acclamations of applause by their grateful countrymen. With the first convenient opportunity I was conveyed to Haslar Hospital, at Gosport, and placed under the care of Surgeon Dodd as out-patient, there not being sufficient room, from the number

of wounded seamen, to admit me into the hospital. During the time I lay under his hands I lodged at Number 2, Riemes Alley, Gosport, and supported myself with money I had received from Captain Harvey prior to the engagement. After four months' attendance I obtained a partial cure ; for Surgeon Dodd, though the utmost of his skill was exerted, could not extract the ball, it having lodged, as before stated, among the tendons, to have cut among which, he stated, would make me a cripple for life.'

Mary must have acquired considerable skill in the art of concealing her sex if she really was Mr. Dodd's patient for four months without his discovering her secret !

After obtaining her discharge from Haslar, Mary returned to the Royal Navy. She was appointed to the *Vesuvius*, a small ship known as a bomb, attached to a squadron under the command of Sir Sidney Smith.

' While on board the *Vesuvius* we encountered a most tremendous storm, in which I was employed on an occasion that I can never think of without being astonished at the hardships which in youth a human being is capable of sustaining. It was necessary for someone on board to go to the jib-boom to catch the jib-sheet, which in the gale had got loose. The continual lunging of the ship rendered this duty particularly hazardous, and there was not a seaman on board but

rejected this office. I was acting in the capacity of midshipman, though I never received pay for my service in this ship but as a common man. This circumstance I mention only to show that it was not my particular duty to undertake the task, which, on the refusal of several who were asked, I voluntarily undertook. Indeed, the preservation of us all depended on this exertion. On reaching the jib-boom I was under the necessity of lashing myself fast to it ; for, the ship every minute making a fresh lunge, without such a precaution I should inevitably have been washed away. The surges continually breaking over the ship, I suffered an uninterrupted wash and fatigue for six hours before I could quit the post I occupied. When danger is over a sailor has little thought or reflection, and my messmates, who had witnessed the perilous situation in which I was placed, passed it off with a joke, observing that I had only been " sipping sea-broth " ; but it was a broth of a quality that, though most seamen relish it, yet few, I imagine, would like to take it in the quantity I was compelled to do.

' Continuing on the French coast with intent to rejoin Sir Sidney, we fell in with two privateers near Dunkirk, from whom, observing their superior force, Captain Tomlinson endeavoured to make sail. The Frenchmen, observing his determination, crowded all the sail they could make, in chase ; and we instantly commenced a running fire, which continued seven hours, at the end of

which their superior weight of metal brought us to ; we were in consequence immediately boarded. What became of Captain Tomlinson, the vessel and part of the crew, I know not, as myself and William Richards, a young midshipman, were separated from the rest and carried on board one of the privateers that captured us. We imagined that the rest were conveyed on board the other ; but have since reason to think the *Vesuvius* was recaptured, as she is now again in the British Service.

‘ When on board the privateer we were deprived of our dirks and conveyed to Dunkirk, where we were lodged in the prison of St. Clare in Church Street, which had a little before belonged to the nuns of St. Clare, some of whom, since the Revolution, have settled in England. Here I experienced the hardships of a French prison for the tedious space of eighteen months, in the course of which time Richards and myself projected a plan for our escape by getting on the top of the prison in order to jump off ; but, being observed by a sentinel on duty, we were both confined in separate dungeons, where it was so dark that I never saw daylight during the space of eleven weeks, and the only allowance I received was bread and water, let down to me from the top of the cell. My bed consisted only of a little straw—not more than half a truss—which was never changed. For two days I was so ill in this dreadful place that I was unable to stir from my wretched couch



to reach the miserable pittance, which, in consequence, was drawn up in the same state as it had been let down. The next morning a person, who, I suppose, was the keeper of the place, came into the dungeon without a light (which way he came I know not, but suppose by a private door, through which I afterwards passed to be released), and called out to me, "Are you dead?" To this question I was only able to reply by requesting a little water, being parched almost to death by thirst, resulting from the fever which preyed on me. He told me he had none, and left me in a brutal manner, without offering the least relief. Nature quickly restored me to health and I sought the bread and water with as eager an inclination as a glutton would seek a feast. About five weeks after my illness, an exchange of prisoners taking place, I obtained my liberty, but did not see anything of Richards till after my arrival in England, where I met him by chance near Covent Garden.

'On my deliverance from prison I was extremely weak, though in excellent spirits, but could scarcely bear the light for some days afterwards, it having an effect on my eyes as if everything round me was chalk. I had thoughts of returning to England by the means of those who effected my release, but was diverted from this intention by an unexpected circumstance.

'Following my fellow-prisoners just released, and from the pain in my leg being considerably

behind them, it was my chance to overhear the conversation of a gentleman making inquiries in English of some seafaring men (by appearance) in Church Street, near the market, respecting any lad they knew willing to make a voyage to America in quality of ship's steward. Immediately I accosted him and proffered my service, being destitute of necessities, and preferring such a situation, if I could obtain it, to a return to England with the rest of my countrymen lately exchanged. The gentleman immediately asked me my present situation at Dunkirk, which I briefly explained; in consequence of which I accompanied him back to the prison of St. Clare, where, finding from the keepers of the prison that I had given him a true relation, he engaged me in the above capacity to perform the voyage to New York, and thence to England (which he informed me would be his next voyage) for fifty pounds and all I could make, at the same time advancing me sufficient cash in part to fit me out. His name was Captain John Field, of the *Ariel*, merchantman, New York, on board which vessel I immediately embarked; and during our short stay at Dunkirk was employed in correcting the ship's books, paying the men, victualling the ship, and taking in the cargo. Our vessel was chiefly laden with bale goods, among which was French lace to the value of £5,000. We set sail for New York in the month of August, 1796, and arrived, after a successful and expeditious

voyage of not more than a month, at the place of our destination, which on going on shore I mistook for London, and particularly remarked a church so like that in Covent Garden that I was absolutely confirmed in the idea.'

In America Mary spent 'the most agreeable fortnight of my life' on Rhode Island with Captain Field's family. One embarrassment she suffered, however. The captain's niece conceived an ardent attachment for her uncle's young supercargo, which continued even after Mary had refused an offer of marriage. Indeed, when she left Rhode Island for New York she was overtaken by a messenger with the news that the lady, in the agony of bereavement, had had a fit, and that Mary must go back at once to console her. Finally she was only allowed to depart after she had promised to return from England as quickly as possible.

The *Ariel* then recrossed the Atlantic, casting anchor off Rotherhithe on November 20th, 1796. Here Mary met with an adventure which ended her career at sea.

'The mate, John Jones, a native of New Providence, and myself agreed on a little excursion on shore, previous to our leaving England, to which purpose we put on a plain seaman's dress, knowing the prejudice of most of the lower people about Wapping against officers of any description, whom in general they considered as little better

than spies on their actions. But while about to land at St. Catherine's we were attacked by a press-gang, whom we resolutely opposed; I in my defence taking up one of the scullers of the boat, with which I struck one or two who attempted to secure me. In this contest I received a wound on my head by a cutlass, a large seam from which remains to the present hour. After a long struggle, during which I was tumbled out of the boat up to my armpits in water, the mate and myself were both secured. Fortunately for him he had his warrant as an American officer about him, which procured his discharge when taken on board the tender. On my examination, being unprepared for such an event, I had inadvertently left my protection as an American on board the *Ariel* behind me. This circumstance, with the treachery of Jones, who informed the regulating captain that I was an Englishman (for he was particularly attached to the niece of Captain Field, but had lost all hope of success with her from her known partiality for me), and, moreover, stated I was the best seaman on board of their vessel. This declaration, joined with the want of the certificate I had left in the *Ariel*, occasioned my detention on board the tender for three days and nights. In this situation my indignation at the treachery of Jones agitated me beyond anything I had hitherto suffered; and I thought of various schemes, but without putting any in practice, to effect my deliverance.

At length, there being a sufficient number of impressed men collected to clear the tender for the reception of others, myself and the rest of the men confined were brought up on deck, in order to be sent to different ships. Finding I had nothing to prevent this but a disclosure of what I had so long kept within my own breast, I accosted the inspecting officers, and told them I was unfit to serve His Majesty in the way of my fellow-sufferers, being a female. On this assertion they both appeared greatly surprised, and at first thought I had fabricated a story to be discharged, and sent me to the surgeon, whom I soon convinced of the truth of my assertion. The officers upbraided each other with ignorance at not discovering before that I was a woman, and readily gave me a discharge.'

The remainder of Mary's story is in the main a narrative of persistent misfortune. Her secret being out, she no longer cared to go to sea ; but, on the other hand, she could never cure herself of her liking for male attire or her predilection for the masculine habits of drinking and smoking, which she had acquired in the King's ships. She lived, for the most part, in great poverty, although she was awarded a pension by the Navy Pay Office and received numerous charitable grants from different persons of consequence. She suffered a great deal from her old wounds, which compelled her to go on several occasions into



hospital ; and she suffered still more, if we may believe her, from the rascality of her associates, on whom her comments are generally severe and sometimes amusing.

Once, for instance, she was lodging in Shoe Lane with Mrs. Jones, a laundress :

‘ I had not yet changed my seaman’s attire, but during the stay made with Mrs. Jones I resumed the dress of my own sex, though at times I could not entirely forget my seafaring habits, but frequently dressed myself and took excursions as a sailor. In less than a month I received the greater part of the money due to me from the Navy Pay Office, which I cheerfully shared with the family of Mrs. Jones, who, notwithstanding, treated me in an ungrateful manner, misrepresenting me to the gentlemen who had raised the subscription as a person on whom their bounty was thrown away, and more inclined to masculine propensities, such as smoking, drinking grog, etc., than what became a female ; though I never took any of the latter but she was always invited to a part, and of which I never found her backward in taking a good allowance.’

So much for Mrs. Jones !

Mary never quite lost her masculine ways or her habit of meeting with odd adventures. She was present when an attempt was made on the life of King George III, and afterwards identified

one of the assailants ; she was accorded interviews by the Queen and by many other prominent people who had heard of her story ; she was imprisoned in Newgate for debt ; and during one of her escapades in male attire she was actually initiated as a Freemason.

In 1804 she met with a serious accident. She was thrown from a coach, and, in addition to other injuries, one of her arms was fractured. She never quite recovered from this last misfortune, and, on February 4th, 1808, after nearly four years of sickness and suffering, died at the age of thirty-one.

THE MISFORTUNES OF AARON SMITH



## THE MISFORTUNES OF AARON SMITH

OF all the people who have ever given to the world the story of their misfortunes, few have endured such cruel ill-luck or met with such a series of mischances as Aaron Smith, the mate of the *Zephyr*. By his own account<sup>1</sup> and, let us add, by the verdict of a jury, he was an honest British sailor, though there were some who thought otherwise. The reader who takes up his little book must form his own conclusions. At least he will receive two impressions : first, that Aaron certainly was a much-tried man ; and secondly, that no fairy godmother had gifted him at birth with a sense of humour to support him through the troubles of life.

His adventures really began with a voyage he made to the West Indies in 1821. Instead of returning home with his ship, when she was due to sail, he threw up his job and stayed on in the islands. Here he does not appear to have prospered overmuch, for, after knocking about for a couple of years, he arrived one day in Kingston, Jamaica, with a strong desire to make his way back to England. He wanted, he tells us, to see his family again ; and perhaps his health, which had been none too good during his stay

<sup>1</sup> *The Atrocities of the Pirates*



in the islands, had also something to do with his decision.

However that may be, he got a post as chief mate in the *Zephyr*, an English brig bound for London under the command of Captain Lumsden. She carried several passengers, including a Captain Cowper, five or six children and a black female servant ; besides a cargo which consisted mostly of sugar and coffee.

Aaron early conceived a very poor opinion of his chief's seamanship. After leaving Kingston, the *Zephyr* ran into a north-easterly gale and a heavy swell, in the face of which Lumsden, much against his mate's advice, decided to take his ship by the leeward passage past the Grand Caymans. Such a course was likely to prove more sheltered, but, as Aaron pointed out, it involved approaching perilously near the coast of Cuba, which bore, even so late as the eighteen-twenties, a very bad reputation for piracy.

For four or five days the *Zephyr* sailed on, until she reached a point not many miles from Cape San Antonio, the south-west headland of Cuba. On the fifth day, in the afternoon, Aaron was walking the deck with Captain Cowper, when they saw a schooner standing out towards them. They took a look at her through a telescope, and something about her rig aroused their suspicions. Although the good old days of the pirates were past, the slackness of the Spanish Government and the innumerable little bays and estuaries



PIRATES DECOYING AN AMERICAN SHIP

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made this particular bit of the coast of Cuba an ideal haunt for bad characters ; and there had lately been, as Aaron knew, more than one case in which a home-going ship, laden with specie or a rich cargo, had been overhauled, captured and borne off in triumph.

The schooner continued to bear steadily towards the *Zephyr*. The closer she drew, the less did Aaron and his companion like the look of her ; and at length they went off to the captain and urged him to alter his course and veer away from the strange ship. But Captain Lumsden was not the man to take advice from subordinates or passengers, and the *Zephyr* sailed on as before, while the other vessel came up on her rapidly. At the end of half an hour, when the two ships were quite close to each other, a crowd of men suddenly swarmed on to the schooner's decks, and she began to hoist out boats.

Now at last Captain Lumsden took fright and ordered the course to be altered two points. But it was too late. The schooner came up fast, and when she was within gunshot her captain hailed the brig and ordered her to lower a boat and send her commander aboard. Lumsden ignored the order and crowded on sail ; whereupon the stranger discharged a volley of musketry, which caused very little damage, but a good deal of alarm. Lumsden was frightened out of his wits, and gave up attempting to escape. He ordered his men to lay the mainyard back, and stood to.

While this was being done, a boat, manned by nine or ten ruffians, bristling with muskets, knives and cutlasses, put out from the pirate. They reached the *Zephyr*, boarded her, and compelled Aaron, Cowper and Captain Lumsden (with a knife in the small of the back) to enter the boat. The three men were then taken across to the schooner ; and scarcely had they set foot upon her deck than they were set upon savagely and beaten with the flats of cutlasses. A good beginning, but worse was to follow ! With kicks and curses their captors dragged them before the pirate captain, and so they found themselves in the presence and at the mercy of one of the blackest scoundrels in the Caribbean. He was a half-caste, the son of a Spanish father and an Indian mother, a man of about thirty-two, stout, with black hair and an aquiline nose, and of a most ferocious and forbidding appearance.

He began the interview by cross-examining Lumsden as to the nature of his cargo : he suspected that the *Zephyr* was carrying home coin or specie. This Lumsden denied.

“ Don’t imagine I’m a fool ! ” thundered the pirate. “ I know that all vessels going to Europe have specie aboard.” He added that unless the money was produced—and quickly—he would set fire to the *Zephyr* and leave her to burn with every soul in her.

However, having shown his teeth, he was content to let the matter rest for the moment,



doubtless feeling confident that Lumsden, after a little reflection, would see the wisdom of complying with his demands. It was getting dark, and the hour had arrived when a good pirate sits down to supper and a carouse. The three prisoners were quite kindly treated; they were taken off and given a meal of garlic, chopped onions and bread. Very soon, however, they had another unpleasant surprise; for the pirate captain reappeared and produced a new plan. He would, he said, release Lumsden and Cowper, provided they fell in with his designs, but he proposed to keep Aaron. He needed a mate to help him navigate the schooner, and Aaron would do nicely for the job. As for Aaron, he was aghast at the suggestion. He declared that he was no pirate, that he had never had the slightest ambitions in that direction. And Lumsden, who did not want to lose his mate, supported him in his protest until the ruffian turned fiercely on him. "If I do not keep him," he snapped, "I shall keep you."

That silenced Lumsden, and so the matter was settled.

The next morning the pirate, having repeated his threats of what he would do if no money were found in the *Zephyr*, sent his men aboard to plunder her. At the same time he allowed Aaron to accompany them in order to fetch his belongings. "Mind," he said, as Aaron went off, "you obey me, or I'll take off your skin!"

There were wild scenes aboard the *Zephyr* that morning. The pirates took possession of the ship. They beat and hustled the crew; they flung the cargo about, seizing whatever took their fancy; they stole most of the stores and got riotously drunk on the liquor; and when Aaron went down to his cabin he found that it had been rifled, and that much of his property was missing.

But in spite of all their efforts the pirates could find no gold. They were furious. They seized Lumsden and Cowper, took them below deck, and lashed them to the pumps; they then piled combustibles round them, and swore they would fire the ship (and the captain first of all) unless the money was produced. At last Lumsden gave way and brought out a box of doubloons. When he said that that was all he had the pirates tied him up again, and renewed their threats. As a result he disgorged nine more doubloons, which he explained had been entrusted to his care by a poor woman.

“Don’t speak to me of poor people!” said the captain. “I am poor, and your countrymen and the Americans have made me so.”

Back went Lumsden to the pumps. He persisted that he had no more to disgorge, and this time he was probably speaking the truth. But the pirates would not believe him. A match was set to the pile; the flames roared up; and not till the unfortunate man, scorched and blackened

by the fire, was screaming with agony, did his torturers take his word and release him.

The pirates, having seized everything of value on which they could lay their hands, now prepared to leave the *Zephyr*, taking Aaron with them. He, at the moment of departure, renewed his expostulations, until the captain cut him short, rounding on him knife in hand, and swearing he would slice his head off if he did not go over the side at once. So Aaron, realising that he had little choice in the matter, obeyed. Such was his despair at his predicament, he tells us, that on reaching the schooner he tried to commit suicide. He was prevented in time, and the captain then told him that if he took such a liberty again he would be lashed to a gun and left to starve.

The *Zephyr*, with her captain half-burnt and wholly scared, her decks and holds in wild disorder, all her money, most of her stores, and a good deal of her cargo gone, was now cast loose with orders to keep clear of Havannah ; while the schooner sailed back to her home port at the mouth of the Rio Medias, on the north coast of Cuba.

If Aaron had been hoping that his prospects might improve on reaching harbour, he was quickly disillusioned. He found that his new captain was on the best of terms with the local Spanish authorities ; and almost at once a party which included two magistrates, a priest and several ladies came aboard on a friendly visit.

With such company to entertain, the parties

resolved to make a night of it, and there was drinking and dancing until a late hour. Poor Aaron ! On the top of his misfortunes he found that he was expected to make himself pleasant in the uncongenial society he had been compelled to join. He was dragged out of the corner where he had been glumly effacing himself and told to dance. He refused. But the captain had a way of his own with obstinate people, and very soon Aaron found himself sulkily taking the floor—or rather the deck—with a seductive young lady called Seraphina. Presently he found that life still held some compensations. Seraphina, he confesses, was an uncommonly pretty girl, and showed her good taste by at once falling in love with him. And he, it is sad to relate, seems to have encouraged her, less for the sake of her *beaux yeux* than in the hope that through her he might find some means of escape.

At length it was time for the visitors to take their departure ; but before they left they were loaded with gifts, taken from the plunder of the *Zephyr*. The captain, in a fit of absent-minded generosity, even presented the priest with Aaron's trunk and all its contents ; and the priest, duly grateful, assured the pirates that their late success must be entirely ascribed to his prayers, which he promised to continue on behalf of their future enterprises.

On the next day the *Zephyr's* cargo was auctioned. Among those who came aboard the

schooner for the sale was the now infatuated Seraphina. Aaron was kept busy weighing out coffee, but appears to have found time for a mild flirtation. He told the lady, to her delight, that he was a bachelor; and, though she pretended to be shocked, she became positively ecstatic when the deceitful fellow had the temerity to suggest that they should elope to England together.

Meanwhile the fun was becoming fast and furious. Everybody—buyers and sellers, pirates and officials—was drunk, and presently, to add to the entertainment, two of the men quarrelled. Out flashed their knives, and a desperate and bloody fight began. It ranged up and down the crowded deck, in and out of the spectators, and only ended when one of the combatants fell, stabbed in the breast.

But that did not finish the affair. The victor, doubtless fearing that as soon as his enemy was sufficiently recovered he would take his revenge, went off to the captain and laid an information against him. Aboard the schooner, a little while back, there had been a hot dispute, which had ended in the departure, voluntary or compulsory, of the chief mate and his supporters, who had fallen foul of the captain. They had gone ashore, vowing vengeance, and were believed to be awaiting a favourable opportunity to turn the tables and capture the ship. The victorious pirate now told the captain that the recent quarrel had arisen out of his discovery that



the other man was in league with the chief mate.

The captain was taking no chances. Without a trial or enquiry of any sort, and totally disregarding the wounded man's denials, he ordered his legs and arms to be chopped off with a blunt hatchet. He personally superintended this horrible operation, and when, on its conclusion, the man was still breathing, he ordered his body to be mangled with knives and then thrown overboard. This was done.

The next day a sail was reported in the offing, and the schooner hurried out of harbour in pursuit. But most of the pirates were still drunk, and when night fell the quarry was lost—and so was the schooner, which did not reach the river again until late the following day.

Scarcely was she back at her anchorage than a boat put out from the shore, full of men who were recognised as belonging to the chief mate's party. The captain at once ordered thirty muskets to be loaded and brought on deck. When the boat was some two hundred yards away, the men in her ceased rowing and hoisted a handkerchief as a flag of truce. The crew of the schooner did the same; but as the boat came forward again they poured a deadly volley into her. Five men were killed outright, and the sixth, who tried to escape by swimming, was overhauled by the schooner's boat and captured. Here was another chance for the captain to show Aaron of what stuff he was made. The unfortunate

man was put to the 'ordeal by mosquito.' Wounded, and stripped of all his clothes, he was lashed to the stern of the dinghy, which was then rowed for the space of three hours up and down a channel of the river bordered by swamps. A cloud of mosquitoes and sand-flies hung round the naked man, and in a little while he was so swollen from their bites as to be almost unrecognisable. After this torture he was taken back to the schooner and told to confess his complicity in the plot to capture the ship ; and, when he protested his innocence, a lump of pig iron was tied round his neck and he was flung overboard to drown.

The next morning another sail was sighted, and again the pirate went out to give chase. The stranger was a brig, and, when she found she was being pursued, she hove-to and hoisted British colours. The captain did not like the look of this ; suspecting a trap, he ordered Aaron to take a boat alongside and investigate. Aaron unwisely argued the point, whereupon the captain flew into a fearful passion and told him to prepare for death. He was blindfolded and carried forward to face a file of muskets. At a given signal a volley was fired, but was evidently aimed over his head, with the object of scaring him, for it left him unhurt. His bandage was then removed and he was lashed to the mainmast ; and gunpowder was scattered all round him, with a train laid to it. He was, he was told, to be blown up, a favourite

punishment of the captain's for minor breaches of discipline. A match was applied, and in the explosion that followed Aaron was stunned. When his bonds were cut he fell forward in a dead faint, and on his recovery the suffering he endured from his burns was so excruciating that he readily undertook to obey any orders the captain might give.

However, while discipline was thus being vindicated, the strange brig had made good her escape, and the pirates did not trouble to pursue her.

Aaron crawled off to his bunk, and, exhausted by his torture, fell asleep. When he awoke a few hours later the pain from his burns was so extreme that he took a knife and tried to kill himself; but before he could carry out his intention the steward came in and disarmed him. The captain was very angry when he heard of Aaron's attempt. "I shall blow you up again," he threatened; "for I see it is the only way to make you obey me."

When the schooner was back in harbour Aaron asked for his medicine chest, in order that he might treat his wounds. When it was given to him, he took out a bottle of laudanum and swallowed the greater part of its contents, hoping in this manner to end his life. But probably the overdose acted as an antidote to the poison, for the only effect it had was to send him into a deep sleep.

While the schooner lay in the river, some of the crew who had gone ashore had a brush with

the chief mate's party. In the fray Seraphina's father, the magistrate, was wounded; and in order to oblige him the captain sent Aaron on a mattress to his house to doctor him. So he had another interview with Seraphina, at which promises were renewed and plans of escape were laid. But, before they could be carried out, Aaron was forced to return to the schooner, which was putting off in pursuit of another ship that had been sighted. This time the pirates ran down their quarry and captured her. The captain was ordered aboard the schooner, he and his crew were roughly handled, and the ship, which was Dutch, was taken back to the Rio Medias, where her cargo was distributed and sold.

A day or two later Aaron was again sent ashore to dress the magistrate's wounds, and on his way he had another nasty adventure. His boat met that of the chief mate's party, diminished now by casualties, but still looking for trouble. There was a brisk engagement, in which Aaron joined with the greater good will since he felt that if he was fighting with one lot of pirates as his allies, he was fighting against another lot as his enemies. His party at length gained the upper hand, and all six men in the other boat were summarily dispatched.

After this affair Aaron made his way to the magistrate's house, where he had another talk with Seraphina, and learnt that she had succeeded in procuring a guide who was ready to conduct

them to the nearest civilised Spanish settlement. In eight or ten days, Seraphina assured him, the preparations would be complete and the flight could take place. Aaron, elated by this news, returned to his uncongenial shipmates aboard the pirate.

He paid one more visit to Seraphina (under the old pretext) before the fateful day fixed for the escape arrived. He found the lady on this occasion in a whirl of ecstatic anticipation. "I have arranged all," she cried as soon as she saw him, and flung herself into his arms. Too agitated to speak, Aaron, as he confesses, clasped the 'lovely creature' to his breast.

At length the appointed day dawned. Aaron waited until five o'clock in the evening, and then, pleading his usual excuse, went ashore. But an unpleasant surprise was waiting for him. When he reached the magistrate's house, Seraphina's mother, hitherto all smiles, met him with cold and angry looks. The daughter herself was dissolved in tears. And if Aaron was still uncertain whether his secret had leaked out, all his doubts were dispelled when he went in to interview an indignant father.

"Well, sir," thundered the magistrate, as Aaron approached his bed of sickness, "I have detected you in your base and nefarious design."

But Aaron did not lose his head. After a few days in the society of the pirate captain a mere



angry parent must have seemed a very tame affair to him. Like many another in such circumstances, he dissembled.

“ Good God, sir ! ” he exclaimed, as though aghast. “ I hope you are not delirious ! ”

So saying, he produced his lancet, the sight of which had a daunting effect upon the magistrate. And when he announced his intention of bleeding his patient until he was cured of his unhappy delusion, the patient hastily dropped his hectoring manner, and showed a disposition to discuss the affair.

Then it all came out. The guide had played a double game. He had demanded and obtained from Seraphina a substantial payment in advance. He had then gone off to the lady's father and told him the whole story.

Aaron, of course, lied like a man. He liked the lady, he said ; he respected her ; but that he should have dreamed of attempting to elope with her was too preposterous a suggestion to be credited by any man of intelligence. In fact, that the magistrate should have believed such a tale was evidence of the precarious state of his health. In the middle of his protestations, when the magistrate was beginning to waver, Seraphina came in and lifted up her voice to such a purpose, that in a short time the deluded parent was quite persuaded that he had been hoaxed. After which Aaron bled him thoroughly—not, as he candidly avows, because the poor man needed bleeding,

but in order to kill any suspicion that might have remained.

However, though Aaron had slipped out of what at one moment had looked like a nasty scrape, he returned to the ship in the lowest of spirits. Seraphina's plan of escape had been completely knocked on the head ; nor was it by any means certain that his friend the pirate captain was going to prove as easy to dupe, when the story reached his ears, as the magistrate had been. As a matter of fact, the captain took the business very well. He merely forbade Aaron to go ashore again, and mentioned casually that in a short time he would have no further use for his mate's services, and that then he proposed to kill him.

During the next few days Aaron was kept too busy to speculate overmuch about the future. Several ships were chased, and three were brought back to harbour and stripped of their cargoes, which were then sent in small craft to Havannah to be sold. In the first of these piracies, Aaron, to his future undoing, had to play a prominent part ; for he was forced, under threats, to board the victim and bring off her captain.

Afterwards he was laid up for some days with a sharp attack of fever ; and during his indisposition (the man was born for trouble !) was much embarrassed by another adventure. It happened that among the prisoners from the third captured ship were a Spaniard and his wife.

The former took kindly to his new life and company, made the best of a bad job, and spent his time carousing with the pirates. His partner, on the other hand, perhaps feeling herself neglected, conceived a passionate though unreciprocated affection for Aaron. Although, as he assures us, he repelled all her advances, she would not let him alone, and managed to compromise him pretty thoroughly. At length her husband began to be jealous, and when, after one or two suspicious incidents, he caught his wife sitting on Aaron's knee, he made a fine fuss, and went off to fetch the captain.

Here was another very delicate position for Aaron; the captain was always an unknown quantity; and there was the additional complication that Seraphina might come to hear of the affair and put her own construction on it, when there would be the devil to pay. Fortunately for Aaron, the captain treated the whole matter as a huge jest, and, as both the Spaniard and his wife were sent off a few days later, no one was the worse for the incident.

News now reached the Rio Medias that revived Aaron's flagging hopes of regaining his freedom. The pirates had been going a little too far. Their recent successes had made them notorious, and one or two of the ships they had lately plundered had limped back to port with the story. Complaints began to reach Havannah, and at last the Spanish Governor—evidently the kind of man

who never does to-day what he can put off till to-morrow—came to the conclusion that he must do something. He had, it is true, no liking for strong measures. He had no particular quarrel with the pirates—in fact, as we shall see, he had more than a little fellow-feeling for them—and even if his own pocket was not well lined with ‘accommodation’ money, the pockets of most of his subordinates were. Still, something had to be done, with the Americans getting restive, and ominous grumblings coming from the British Admiral at Jamaica. What he actually did must have appeared quite impressive on paper, but did not in fact amount to very much. He sent to Rio Medias a squadron of five gunboats by sea and a punitive force of one hundred soldiers by land, with instructions to destroy utterly the nest of pirates.

What happened to the soldiers is not quite clear ; probably they lost themselves on the way. But the gunboats actually reached their destination, or as near to it as they had any intention of getting ; and, though they did not worry the pirates very much, they were a source of some anxiety to that old ruffian, Seraphina’s father, the magistrate. Once, it is true, they pretended to chase the pirate schooner, but she had not the slightest difficulty in eluding them ; and on another occasion, when she brazenly sailed out of the river to cut off a passing vessel under the noses of the gunboats, they judged it prudent to ignore her.

So Aaron was back at the beginning again. The Seraphina plan had failed and the gunboats had shown their mettle. He therefore applied himself to new schemes for escape. An opportunity soon came. The captain fell sick of a fever, and while he was laid up such small amount of discipline as formerly prevailed among the crew disappeared. They quarrelled more violently and drank more deeply than ever ; and nightly they lay like logs, dead to the world.

One day two fishermen arrived to trade with the pirates, and, being persuaded to spend a festive evening aboard, moored their canoe to the schooner's stern. The bottle passed. The night ran its usual course of drink, debauchery and disorder, ending up with a general stupor. No watch was kept, and not a soul was awake. Then came Aaron's chance. It was a dark and gusty evening. The wind rattled round the ship ; squalls of rain drummed on the deck ; and such noise as he might make would be unheard, even if anyone were sufficiently awake to hear anything.

So he filled a bag with biscuit, picked his way cautiously among the drunken sleepers, many of whom lay snoring where they had fallen on the deck, and slipped over the side into the fishermen's canoe. Stealthily he cut the painter, and, scarcely daring to move, allowed the little craft to drift away into the night. When he was at a safe distance from the schooner he trimmed his boat, set the sail, and steered for Havannah.



When day broke he had made forty miles, and from his knowledge of his late hosts felt himself in no serious danger of recapture. And so it turned out ; for, sailing before a favourable wind, he reached Havannah at six o'clock on the following morning.

That was the last of the pirates—as far as Aaron was concerned ; nor do we know anything of their fate. It would have been interesting to learn how that ruffian, the captain, behaved when the news of the escape reached him on his sick-bed ; and to what bloody end he eventually came ; or with what lamentations Seraphina heard that her perfidious young man had fled alone.

But Aaron was preoccupied with other matters. *His* misfortunes, at any rate, were by no means over. At first he had a stroke of luck, encountering in the harbour an old acquaintance, Captain Williams, who took him aboard his ship, gave him a meal and a shake-down, and undertook to get him a job as mate in a home-going ship.

Aaron, however, seemed bound to get into mischief. What must the silly fellow do the next day but go ashore ? And before he rightly knew what had happened he was being marched off to gaol by a file of soldiers. Someone had recognised him and denounced him as a pirate ; and the Spanish authorities were delighted to show the world their zeal in rounding up such folk—especially when the rascals were foreigners. So off went the luckless Aaron, still protesting,

and speedily found himself in one of the vilest and most verminous prisons in the Indies, where he endured five weeks of misery and starvation in company with some of the choicest scoundrels in Cuba.

His ill-luck dogged him to the end. Scarcely had he entered his gaol than he was involved in a sanguinary struggle with a sturdy ruffian who demanded from him his trousers ; and when, after a few days' confinement, he was brought up for examination, the interpreter, an Irishman—who probably expected a bribe which he did not get—so falsified Aaron's deposition as to make the case look very black against him.

At last, however, Aaron was taken before the Governor himself, when he learnt to his distress that he had become an international question. Both Great Britain and Spain claimed him for trial, the former because he was a British subject, the latter because his alleged piracies had been committed in Spanish waters. The Governor, in a very significant way, told Aaron that it would be necessary to look up the law and obtain a ruling, a polite hint that his legal researches would be assisted by a timely present. But Aaron did not take the hint, and was sent back to prison. A few more days passed, and one of the judges came to visit him. He told Aaron that in the absence of any inducement to the contrary the Governor had decided to hand him over to the English for trial. But before delivering himself,

as judge, of a final opinion, he remarked that if Aaron cared to insult him by the offer of a present he might, provided the insult were sufficiently heavy, arrange the affair in a more satisfactory manner. When Aaron protested that he had not a penny in the world, the judge laughed at him. What ! Here was a man who had been pirating off the Rio Medias for several weeks and had nothing to show for it. Incredible ! And when Aaron persisted in his tale, the Spaniard became very incensed, and marched him off to gaol again.

A few days later, however, H.M.S. *Sybil* arrived in Havannah harbour, and Aaron was handed over with due formality to his fellow-countrymen. The *Sybil* was on her way home, but for the prisoner the voyage was a far from pleasant experience. He was very ill ; the Admiral, he tells us, treated him with a callous lack of consideration, and put him in irons ; and ever before his eyes floated 'an unpleasant vision of Execution Dock.

On arrival in England he was brought to London, and after a period of confinement in Newgate was brought up for trial.

The piteous story which Aaron unfolded to the Court evoked a good deal of sympathy ; and he needed it all. To his amazement, his late captain, Lumsden, did not confirm his version of the capture of the *Zephyr*, and even hinted that Aaron's departure to the pirate schooner had not been quite so involuntary as he made out ; while



THE IDLE APPRENTICE SENT TO SEA  
He is being shown a pirate hanging from a gibbet  
(From an engraving by William Hogarth)

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PH.D. THESIS

BY JAMES M. HARRIS



two or three of the pirates' later victims turned up, ready to testify that they had seen the accused in very suspicious company.

In fact, matters might have gone ill with Aaron had not a certain young lady—Miss Sophia Knight—appeared to give evidence on his behalf. Her declaration that she was engaged to the prisoner went straight to the hearts of twelve honest British jurymen. What else she had to tell the Court that was to the point is not quite clear, but we learn that she was 'a female of considerable personal attractions'; and doubtless this, too, had its effect on the jury. At any rate, after most of those present had been reduced to tears by Miss Knight's pathetic appeal, Aaron was found 'not guilty' and released.

That, so far as we know, was the end of his misfortunes. But it may be surmised that he married Miss Knight; and if he did, we may be quite sure that she soon found out all about Seraphina—so that perhaps all his troubles were not over when he walked out of the Admiralty Court a free man.



THE TERRIBLE STORY OF THE  
'MARY RUSSELL'



## THE TERRIBLE STORY OF THE 'MARY RUSSELL'

No one who saw the *Mary Russell* in April 1828, as she lay off the port of Barbadoes, would have noticed anything unusual about her. She was just an ordinary small brig, with an ordinary crew and an ordinary captain; she had made, during the preceding winter, one quite ordinary voyage, and she was about to make another. She had carried a cargo of mules from Cork to Barbadoes, and she was going to carry a cargo of sugar, hides and tropical products back to Cork. There was nothing uncommon in that. Nor was there anything uncommon about her crew, which consisted of six men, most of them Irish, and three boys who were entered as apprentices; nor indeed about her captain, William Stewart by name, a slight little man, physically rather a weakling, with red hair and a pale complexion. So far as ship and crew and captain were concerned, the elements of adventure, tragedy and horror past man's imagining must have seemed to be entirely absent.

She carried four passengers: two of them were the men who had come over in charge of the mules, one was a delicate boy called Hammond, and the fourth was a sailor of the name of Raynes.



This last had had some difficulty in persuading Captain Stewart to give him a passage ; he had sailed out to Barbadoes as chief mate of another ship, but had lost his command through drunkenness. In the end, as he was unable to get a berth in any other vessel, he was allowed to sail in the *Mary Russell* ; and both he and the two muleteers seem to have lent a hand in working the ship.

The *Mary Russell* left Barbadoes on May 9th ; and not a soul aboard her seems to have had a suspicion of the truth : that the captain of the ship, that little insignificant fellow, with his friendly manner, his red hair and his white face, was a madman—a dangerous homicidal lunatic who should have been securely lodged within the four walls of an asylum. He had, it is true, a blameless record. He was a good husband, a decent citizen, a capable sailor, a kindly commander. But, though no one knew it as yet, he was mad.

Scarcely had the island of Barbadoes sunk behind the horizon than the captain of the *Mary Russell* began to behave rather queerly. One night, it seems, he had a dream. In it he fancied that God appeared to him and warned him that the bibulous Raynes and some of the crew were plotting to murder him and to seize the ship.

That was the beginning. As the days passed his suspicions became more deeply rooted. Every little accident was given a sinister interpretation ;

every light word was noted and credited with a hidden meaning ; the most trivial action was invested with a terrible significance. For instance, he found that Raynes was spending a good deal of time forward with the crew, that he shaved himself daily in the fo'c's'le, that occasionally he would talk to the men in Erse, a language which the captain did not understand. These were small points, and quite unimportant, but they confirmed the captain's conviction that a mutiny was brewing and that Raynes was the ringleader. There were not the smallest grounds for this belief ; all the evidence points to the fact that the crew of the *Mary Russell* was as honest and disciplined a set of men as ever went to sea ; and that Raynes, apart from his liking for the bottle, was a perfectly harmless person.

But the captain's obsession grew daily stronger, until he felt that he could trust nobody. At first he contented himself with certain precautions which puzzled, but did not alarm, the others. He ordered the chief mate, who had incurred his deep suspicion, to vacate his berth off the cabin and sleep on the half-deck. Then he brought in the second mate, Swanson, to sleep in his place. He began to collect a little armoury of weapons : an axe, a harpoon, some instruments known as granes, and a crowbar. One day a seaman called Howes came to him and asked in all innocence for instruction in taking observations ; and this the captain regarded as plain proof that the

'mutineers' wanted to learn how to navigate the ship before they made away with him. A little later another man brought his fears to fever-heat by enquiring whether Raynes was a good navigator—again a clear indication that Raynes was conspiring to become captain. On little episodes like these the captain brooded and brooded, until he had piled up a mountain of suspicion against his men.

By the time the *Mary Russell* was midway across the Atlantic the suspense had become more than the captain could bear. At length he determined to tax the 'mutineers' with their guilt. He called all hands aft and made them a speech, telling them he was fully aware of the plot against him, and urging them to make a clean breast of it. The men, naturally enough, were amazed. They declared that they knew of no plot, and denied stoutly that there was any intention to mutiny on the part of anyone in the ship.

For the moment the captain was, or pretended to be, satisfied ; but very soon his suspicions returned. His next action had a childish cunning about it. A day or two after the meeting he took Raynes and one of the apprentices into the cabin, and openly charged the former with mutiny, which, he asserted, was proved by the fact that he had been caught talking Irish to the crew. He ignored Raynes's denials, and suddenly, turning to the boy, ordered him to throw some of the ship's instruments overboard. The boy obeyed ;

and the box containing the charts was then thrown after the instruments. When the chief mate, Smith, who had come into the cabin in time to witness this amazing scene, remonstrated, the captain merely replied, "They are my own, and I can make more."

He then tore the leaves out of the log-book, destroyed them, and forbade either of the mates to keep any further reckoning of the voyage.

These curious acts were not quite so pointless as they seem. If the men, the captain reasoned, believed that the charts and instruments had been thrown away, they would not be so likely to turn against him, the only competent navigator in the ship. Had there been any basis for the captain's belief in an impending mutiny the precaution would have been quite sensible, especially as he had been careful to keep and hide away under his bunk sufficient instruments and charts for his own use.

By this time it should have been clear to all on board that Captain Stewart was no longer responsible for his actions. It would not be surprising to find, after this last occurrence, that the much-dreaded mutiny took place—justified, if ever a mutiny was—and that the *Mary Russell* was brought into port with her captain under lock and key. Yet, oddly enough, no one made the least attempt to interfere with him. Perhaps the men were anxious to avoid lending the slightest colour to his wild charges ; or perhaps they really

doubted their ability to sail the ship without him and the instruments. At any rate, they did nothing.

Something now happened which, as it turned out, had the most tragic results. The *Mary Russell* sighted and spoke a passing vessel, the *Mary Harriet*, sailing from New York to Liverpool. Both ships were hove-to, and Captain Stewart went aboard to have a word with the other captain. What he told him we do not know, but he came back to his own ship with a pair of borrowed pistols.

He had now obtained more effective weapons than harpoons or crowbars, and this fact seems to have determined him to take a more resolute line with his 'mutinous' men. During the night of June 18th, Smith, the chief mate, happened to visit the nail locker two or three times, to fetch first oil and then a tool for trimming the binnacle lamp. His footsteps awakened the captain, who was at once on the alert. During that night he took no action, but early the next morning he armed himself with a harpoon, and, going to the half-deck where Smith slept, woke him up. "It is well for you," he said, "after the proceedings of the night, that you are here; for if I had found you forward among the crew I would have put you to death as a mutineer."

He then threatened the mate with the harpoon and accused him of being the chief instigator of the mutiny. By this time the crew had begun



to collect round them, and, joining in the discussion, tried to reassure the captain that there was not the least intention on the part of anyone on board to mutiny. The Captain affected to believe that they at any rate were innocent. He shook hands with them, saying, "You are all honest men except the mate, who, I am satisfied, designed evil against me."

He then ordered the men to seize the mate and tie his hands behind his back.

The men naturally demurred. "If we lash the mate without reason," said one very sensibly, "he will take the law of us when we get home."

Another seaman, Howes, put in: "I do not see anything the matter with the mate."

To avoid carrying out the unwelcome order, the men walked off, while the mate went below, leaving the captain in a state of painful agitation. Here was mutiny with a vengeance! He had given an order, and it had been disobeyed.

While he stood on the half-deck, muttering furiously to himself and obviously in a state of uncontrollable excitement, three of the men—Keating, Connell and Swanson—followed the mate below and begged him to humour the captain. Let him go up on deck, they argued, and allow his hands to be tied, and the old man would soon return to his senses. In an evil hour for all on board Smith agreed, and went up with the three men. They found the captain walking about with his pistols in his hands, ready, it seemed, to

shoot on the smallest provocation. Smith walked up to him, held out his hands, and said, " Here, tie away ! "

In a very short time he had been securely lashed by the three men, and was then, on the captain's orders, taken below and placed in the lazaret, a hole in the deck (or what landsmen would call the floor) of the cabin, where stores were kept. Here he was left, under the personal supervision of the captain, who presently brought him some breakfast (the only food he was to taste in three days), visited him once to test the lashings, and later on, when the unfortunate man was almost suffocated, brought in the carpenter to make an air-hole in the cabin deck.

Here, then, was one of these desperate fellows secured ! But what about the others ? There could be no real safety, felt the captain, with eight able-bodied men at large in the ship, and each one of them physically a more powerful man than himself.

Presently, out of his broodings, emerged an amazing plan. In order to take no risks the captain resolved to confine his entire crew, and to bring the ship into port himself.

On Saturday, June 21st, the brig was in latitude 50° N. and longitude 19° 50' W.—about four hundred miles west-south-west of Cape Clear, and steering towards the entrance into the English Channel. The wind was favourable, the weather was fine, and the *Mary Russell* was carrying

plenty of sail—too much, reflected the captain, for a man to be able to navigate her single-handed. So he ordered her head-sails to be furled and her maintop-sail to be close reefed.

This strange order was carried out without demur ; and the captain went on to his next move. This was to procure accomplices. There was, as we know, no man in the ship whom he felt he could trust ; all were infected in varying degrees with the virus of mutiny. There remained the boys. Of these, Hammond, the passenger, was a mere child, too young and frail to count ; but in the three apprentices, aged fifteen, thirteen and twelve respectively, he hoped to find, and in fact found, useful allies. Although in those days *Treasure Island* had not been written, it was only natural that the boys should regard mutiny and piracy as the kind of adventures they might expect to meet when crossing the Atlantic in a brig. At all events, when the captain sent for them and told them what was brewing they were quite ready to believe him, even without his promises of 'great pecuniary reward, sufficient to make them gentlemen, from the Underwriters of Lloyd's.'

Let us at this point have a look at the ship's cabin, the arrangement of which played an important part in the captain's plan.

It was quite small—twelve feet long by eight or nine feet wide, and six feet high. It was reached from the deck by a small companion opening towards the stern and coming out aft,

near the taffrail. The ladder's angle of descent was so steep that a man, going down into the cabin, could not see what was happening inside until he was almost at the bottom of the companion. The cabin was lighted by ports in the stern and by a small skylight opening on to the quarter-deck. On either side was a berth, one of which was occupied by Hammond, the delicate boy who was making the voyage for his health. In the fore-part of the cabin were the entrances to the berths of the master and the mate; and between them lay an enclosed space, six feet square, used as the breadroom.

At two o'clock on Saturday afternoon, Raynes, two of the men and a boy were up aloft carrying out the captain's orders to shorten sail, when Connell, one of the muleteers, got word that he was wanted in the cabin. When he reached the bottom of the companion he found himself looking into the muzzle of a pistol.

"Confess the truth," said the captain to him, "or I'll blow your brains out."

The unfortunate muleteer was much too surprised to say a word; and as for a confession—he had none to make. The captain, of course, regarded his silence as evidence of a guilty conscience, and, while he covered him with the pistols, two of the boys, who had been hiding in the cabin, came forward with a rope and trussed him up. So much for mutineer number one!

One of the boys, called Deaves, was next sent

forward with a message to Keating, who likewise fell into the trap. He came down the companion, found two revolvers clapped to his head, and gave in without a struggle.

The next victim was Raynes, who by this time had come down from aloft, and was surprised and secured as easily as the others; and after him Swanson, Cramer and Sullivan were each in turn decoyed down that companion into the arms of the captain and his accomplices.

There were now six men, all bound and all helpless, lying in the cabin, not to mention the mate Smith, who of course was still languishing in the lazaret. There remained two men to be secured—Howes and Murley. The first of these was particularly dreaded by the captain, because, although the oldest man in the ship, he was also the most powerful. However, the trick had worked well so far; and, as soon as Sullivan had been trussed up with the others, the usual message was sent to Howes, summoning him to the cabin at once.

But this time the trick did not work. When Howes reached the top of the companion he stopped and called out, "Do you want me below?"

The captain told him to come down. Howes obeyed, but, being a big man, made rather a clatter. The noise was too much for the captain's overwrought nerves, and, before the man had got more than half-way down the ladder,



he stepped forward with his pistols, crying, "Avast there! Not so fast!"

"What are you going to do with those pistols?" demanded Howes suspiciously, stopping short.

"I have found you out," replied the captain, "and heard all about it."

He then ordered Howes to come and be tied up. The latter, though taken by surprise, did not stay to argue the point, but turned and bolted up the companion. The captain at once discharged his pistols, but both misfired; and when Howes was safely on deck he turned and called down that the captain had snapped a brace of pistols at him, for which he meant to have satisfaction when they got to Cork, if it cost him his life. With which remark he made off.

The captain re-primed his pistols and started in pursuit. He caught sight of his man, fired again, and missed; probably he had never used a pistol before. Howes then jumped down the hatchway into the fo'c's'le, where he found Murley and told him of his strange encounter; and the two bewildered men withdrew to the side of the fo'c's'le, where they could not be seen by anyone standing at the hatchway, and waited.

Presently the captain arrived. He knew that his quarry had gone to ground, but feared to follow him, since it was dark below and he might not have been able to use his pistols. So a very strange—if one-sided—conversation followed.

The captain began with threats of what he

would do unless Howes came up at once. To these there was no answer. He then dropped his bullying tone and tried cajolery. In the last two nights, he declared, he had been unable to sleep for thinking of the mutiny that was brewing; nor would he be able to sleep again until every man aboard was properly secured and powerless to harm him.

Incredible as it may appear, this naïve appeal succeeded where threats and pistollings had failed. Howes, like many big men, had a soft heart, and the thought of the captain's sleepless nights so wrought on him that he resolved to do as he was bid. After all, he probably reasoned, he was a much bigger man than the captain; he could free himself whenever he pleased from any bonds that were likely to be put on him; and by humouring the old man he might cure him of this strange delusion of mutiny. So up on deck he went.

The captain, though delighted at the submission of Howes, was not going to take any risks. He set the boys on to tie his feet as well as his hands, and took away his knife—a precaution for which Howes perhaps had not bargained. Murley then came on deck and was tied up in the same way.

The captain had now carried out his mad design. He had secured all his passengers and crew, except for the three apprentices who were helping him, and the child Hammond. The mate was in the lazaret, six of the men were in the cabin, and

the other two were lying on deck. So far his plan had worked well, and it only remained for him to bring the ship back to port.

His next action, after dealing with Howes and Murley, was to inspect the prisoners, who by this time were beginning to find their situation very irksome. The cords were cutting into their flesh, and the atmosphere in the cabin was becoming almost insufferable. In fact, the captain found Keating in a fainting condition, and, being a really humane man at heart who was only driven to desperate measures by what he believed to be stern necessity, he took him on deck, untied his arms, and lashed him to a staple of the companion. Then he returned to Howes, who was taking the whole business quite philosophically and merely asked to be allowed to smoke a pipe—no easy feat for a man whose hands are tied. But the captain, all anxiety to oblige, brought him his pipe, filled it for him, put it in his mouth, and lit it.

An hour or two later night fell, and the men on deck began to complain bitterly of the cold. Again the captain was ready to do what he could, and Murley and Keating were with some difficulty dragged down the companion into the cabin. Howes, however, was left on deck, either because he was too heavy to be handled, or else because the captain feared to let him be with the others. Although he was given a blanket, he continued to complain so much of the cold that at last the

captain stretched a point, and with the aid of the boys half-dragged, half-carried him to the half-deck. There he remained for three hours, after which the captain, who in the solitude of his cabin had probably been beset by all kinds of new fears, came to him once more and tightened his bonds mercilessly. He promised to return to him in an hour's time, but did not appear again until the morning. After leaving Howes he visited the cabin prisoners and tightened their bonds too.

Anyone who has ever been tied up for any period of time knows what a torture bonds become; and after a while, what with the pain and the cold and the captain's failure to keep his promise, Howes could put up with his plight no longer. So he committed a heinous offence: he partially freed himself from those tormenting cords. The other men, who had not his great strength, passed a terrible night, and Murley, round whose neck a rope had been tied as an extra precaution, was nearly strangled.

On Sunday morning the captain rose from his broken slumbers with a new and very bright idea. Somehow, even now, he did not feel quite safe; so he prepared an extraordinary and most ingenious contrivance for the better securing of the 'mutineers.' He got a length of rope about the thickness of the forefinger, and out of this fashioned seven circles big enough to slip over a man's head. He then drove a number of staples into the deck, close to the head and feet of each

of his victims, passed the circles over their heads as far as their necks, and lashed the underparts of the staples. Thus, in order to avoid strangulation, it was necessary for the prisoners to keep perfectly still.

By morning the men were getting desperate. When first they were tied up they had supposed it was a temporary punishment, and that in a short time the captain would come to his senses and release them. Now they realised that he had no intention of freeing them before the *Mary Russell* reached port. In their despair at such a prospect they begged him to cast them adrift in a boat, a suggestion which at first struck the captain as so happy a solution that he offered them forthwith the long-boat, with a compass, sails and ample provisions. But then a difficulty arose. How was the boat to be hoisted out? The captain reckoned that it would be necessary to free two of the men for this purpose, and that he flatly declined to do.

After having fixed the nooses on to the prisoners in the cabin, he went to the half-deck to see how Howes was getting on. "John," he called down the hatchway, "are you there? Are you tied? Turn your back so that I may see."

When Howes turned over the captain saw that he had loosened his lashings. He was profoundly shocked. Here was more mutiny. Howes must come forward at once to be tied up again. Otherwise he must shoot him.



But Howes had had enough of the game. He absolutely refused to be tied up any more. He protested stoutly that he was no mutineer, but an honest man. But to all that he said the captain merely replied by demanding that he should confess his guilt. Howes continued to deny it, asserting that already he had endured 'torments worse than the Spanish rack,' and that he would die rather than submit to being lashed up again.

"Then I must shoot you," said the captain.

"I see murder in your looks," retorted Howes ; "but as I am the oldest of your crew, I shall be the least missed. Fire away ! You're worse than a Turk or a Tartar or any other barbarian. You will yet meet a day of reckoning for this. Death is no terror to me, whatever it may be to others."

So shocked was the captain by this spirited answer that, after pausing to declare that he had always been thought a most humane man by those who had sailed with him, he broke off the argument and opened fire. At such short range he should have killed his man at once. But he was a shocking bad shot. The first ball missed completely ; the second struck Howes on the ball of the thumb. The captain hurriedly re-loaded and fired again, his next shot grazing the man's side. Howes fell over, crying that the last two balls had pierced his entrails, and doubtless hoping that if he lay very still the captain would think he had killed him. He was right. After watching

him for a few moments the captain turned to the boys and remarked, "He is dead." He then sent one of them to examine the body more closely; but Howes shammed well enough to deceive the lad.

"He must soon be thrown overboard," said the captain; but at that moment there was an interruption. A sail hove in sight, and although the captain had just, as he believed, murdered one of his crew in cold blood, he made frantic efforts to attract the attention of those on board. He ran up signals of distress; the strange ship came so close that he was able to hail her; and then, for some unexplained reason, she tacked and bore away on her course.

When the captain, much disappointed, returned to Howes, he was sharp enough to notice that the corpse's hand had been moved.

"The fellow is not dead!" he cried, and fired again, the ball entering the unfortunate man's thigh.

Howes realised that the game was up. "That will do," he groaned.

"No," said the captain, "it will not do. Your voice is too good. But I'll soon make it do."

Calling to the boys to follow him with their axes and harpoons, he jumped down the hatchway on to the half-deck. But Howes, wounded though he was, did not mean to submit without a struggle. With his free hand he tore the fastenings from his legs and, jumping clear of his assailants, picked up a small packing-case.

The captain hung back, urging the lads on. "Strike, my brave boys!" he shouted. "Push your harpoons into him!"

As the boys came forward, Howes made a last appeal to them, asserting once more his innocence and begging them to desist. Two of the boys, impressed by his sincerity, drew back and pleaded with the captain. But he was without mercy.

"Do you want me to spare this man's life," he exclaimed, "and allow ourselves to be butchered!"

The boys returned to the attack. A horrible fight followed. Howes, conscious that the captain was the chief enemy, rushed in, seized him, threw him, pinned him to the ground and tore the pistol from his grasp. All might have been well had he not hesitated, reluctant, even after all that had happened, to take that bloodthirsty madman's life. For while he paused one of the boys—Richards—came up behind and showered blows on his head with an axe. Blinded by the blood that cascaded over his face, Howes staggered to his feet, and the captain, slipping from his grasp, sprang up and fled, closely followed by the boys, who were too frightened to finish off their victim by themselves.

When they had gone, Howes crawled away, covered with wounds and bleeding terribly, and hid among some hogsheads of sugar in the forehold.

After this encounter the captain went back to the cabin to see that his other prisoners were safely stowed. He found them in agony, galled by their lashings and cramped by their long confinement. They groaned, they implored, they cursed. The captain was much moved by the sight of their sufferings, and urged them to pray that a ship might appear and release them all from so painful a situation. He added admonitions of a pious and edifying nature, and ended by fetching his prayer-book, holding it in his upraised hand, and swearing that he would give them the long-boat if only they would agree to leave the ship. This we may believe they were quite ready to do, but when it came to the point the captain shrank from the fearful risk of untying any of the 'mutineers.' Always at the back of his mind was the thought that somewhere, lurking in the hold and with devilry undiminished, was that desperate fellow Howes. At any moment he might sally out of his hiding-place, and, if others of the crew were at large at the time, the odds would be too great even for the redoubtable captain of the *Mary Russell*. The offer of the long-boat was accordingly withdrawn, and bidding his prisoners, against whom he cherished not an atom of ill-feeling, a sad farewell, Captain Stewart went up on deck again.

The *Mary Russell* sailed slowly westward. The hours passed. It was afternoon ; and another sail appeared. Once more the captain hoisted

his signal of distress and made every effort to attract the other ship's attention. It seemed that he had succeeded, for she tacked and hove-to quite close to the *Mary Russell*. But something in the latter must have aroused suspicion. Why were her decks deserted, save for one man? What was she doing under so low a sail, when the weather was fine and the breeze gentle? It smacked of piracy and a trap, thought the stranger, and made off with all speed.

Her departure threw the captain into a frenzy of despair. But suddenly the true explanation flashed upon his disordered mind. It was the judgment of Heaven upon the 'mutineers'; it was the crowning proof of their guilt. And it was for him, the one righteous man aboard the *Mary Russell*, to carry out the sentence. The 'mutineers' must die.

Flinging aside his pistols, he caught up a crow-bar, and, followed by the three boys, burst into the cabin. "The curse of God is upon you all!" he screamed.

The scene that followed was too horrible to admit of detailed description. Deaf to the prayers and shrieks of his victims, Captain Stewart butchered them one by one as they lay bound and helpless on the deck. "Ye ruffians!" he muttered as he struck: "I'll kill you all!" And again, when his deadly work was almost finished: "Ye ruffians! You wanted to take my life; I have taken yours."



Raynes, the innocent origin of his delusion, he dealt with last. "James," he said, as he stood over him, "I put a heavy curse upon you, but now I take it off."

Raynes called piteously on the name of God.

"The devil is your God!" was the savage reply, and then the madman struck home.

Behind him cowered the three boys, dumb with horror. They took no part in this fearful massacre. Indeed, little Hammond, the sick child who had been watching from his berth in the cabin, came timidly forward and begged the captain to spare some of the men at least to take the ship home. But the captain ignored him.

When he had finished with Raynes, he noticed that some of the men were still groaning in their death-agonies. He flung down the crowbar and seized an axe. . . .

There remained the mate Smith, who during this ghastly scene had been lying in the lazaret below. He had heard the screams of his murdered comrades, and through the air-hole in the deck their blood had literally poured on to him. Now it was his turn, and if he had hoped that the captain in his excitement would forget about him he was to be disappointed.

The madman took up his crowbar again, forced it through the air-hole, and jabbed violently at the mate's body. But though the latter's clothing was pierced and he was grazed slightly, he escaped any serious injury. The captain was

not satisfied. He seized a harpoon and thrust savagely through the hole at the prostrate mate. He wounded him on the head, on the ears, and in the side, and nearly gouged out one of his eyes. Still he was not content, and, taking up the axe, began to enlarge the hole in the deck. But while he was at work Smith contrived to struggle to one side, so that he no longer lay directly beneath the aperture ; with the result that when the captain began stabbing again he missed the mate, and struck instead the pile of hides on which his victim had been lying. These he mistook for Smith's body, and thrust fiercely at them until he reckoned that the deed was done. He put his hand through the opening in the deck, felt what he believed to be the mate's neck, found it cold, and remarked, " He is dead for good." He then nailed a board across the hole and left it.

After this carnage the captain, for the moment, recovered his confidence. The ' mutineers '—except Howes—were dead. He was safe. He would now bring the ship to port and enjoy a handsome reward from Lloyd's. He began to feel hungry. He ordered the boys to bring him meat, spirits and water. He sat down in the reeking cabin, among the dead and mutilated bodies of his men, and ate a hearty meal. He was swollen with pride at his achievement. He became boastful. He bade the trembling boys note the steadiness with which he held his glass in his hand. " I

think no more of the bodies before me," he vaunted, "than if they were a parcel of dead dogs."

After his meal and his pipe he retired to his berth to enjoy what he believed to be a well-earned sleep. But before he went, remembering that Howes was still at large, he set one of the boys to keep watch, and barricaded the entrance into the cabin.

Though the captain did not know it, Howes was in no condition to harm anybody. We left him lying, bleeding and exhausted, in the forehold. After some hours a raging thirst drove him from his hiding-place. It was dusk, and, crawling very cautiously out of the hold, he climbed on to the deck in search of something to drink. Though he found the water-butt empty, he discovered some water in the fo'c's'le and drank it greedily. Before returning to his hiding-place he picked up from the deck one of the captain's pistols and an axe, which had been left lying about.

Later he was joined in the hold by another of the victims. Lying very still in the lazaret, Smith had seen his air-hole blocked by the nailing of the board across it. He had heard the footsteps passing to and fro overhead, the sounds of a meal and of talk. Presently he was satisfied that the captain had retired to his berth. In the struggle Smith had partially freed himself from his lashings; he now contrived to reach his

knife, which had not been taken from him, and with its aid cut away the remainder of his bonds.

He was thus able, despite his wounds, to move his limbs ; and so set to work to make his escape. The lazaret, he knew, communicated with the fore-hold, and, though the passage was piled high with cargo, a small space had been left between the top of the cargo and the beams of the deck above. Through this narrow opening he squeezed himself—slowly and painfully—until at length he emerged in the fore-hold, where he found Howes.

Meanwhile the captain had been fast asleep. He awoke, much refreshed, but was at once seized with fresh misgivings. Those boys ! Could he trust them ? Really, he thought not. He sent for them. " God Almighty," he said, " has told me something."

What he had been told he did not explain, but called their attention to one highly suspicious fact. Above his bunk he had hung an old watch, which had stopped a long time before and had never since been wound up. When he awoke the watch was going. Clearly the boys had been meddling. Yes, they must be tied up—all, that is, except Hammond, who was too young and weak and innocent to be capable of any harm. The other three were terrified ; they knew too well how the captain treated those whom he bound. But they could not move him

from his purpose. He swore that he would not hurt a hair of their heads ; he even handed over his pistol to Hammond, telling him that he was to shoot him—the captain—if he attempted to injure the others. But tied they must be. And tied they would have been—and killed too, probably—had not help arrived in the very nick of time.

As he was in the act of lashing up the boys, the captain heard through the open port a voice hailing the *Mary Russell*. He rushed to the stern port and looked out. There was a ship hove-to and quite close. Straining out, he cried : “ For God Almighty’s sake come to my assistance ! ”

“ What is the matter ? ” came across the water.

“ There has been a mutiny on board,” shouted the captain ; “ I have killed eight of my men and one has escaped.”

The ship was the *Mary Stubbs*, an American schooner bound from Barbadoes for Belfast ; and by a curious chance her commander, Captain Callendar, was an old friend of Stewart’s. He had sighted the *Mary Russell* with her ensign at half-mast and reversed, the customary signal of distress, and, identifying her, had hastened to her assistance.

When Stewart appeared, very distraught, on the deck of the brig, Callendar called to him to hold on until he came aboard. A boat was lowered and a few minutes later he had reached the brig.

At first he scarcely knew what to believe.



When shown the cabin, he was overcome with horror, but Stewart pitched him quite a convincing tale. There had been a mutiny, he said, and a plot to murder him. The instruments had been thrown overboard, and he had been forced to finish off the mutineers before they could finish him. "Am I not a valiant little fellow," he enquired gleefully of his friend, "to kill so many men?"

But where, asked Captain Callendar, was the survivor, Howes? They set out to look for him, and came on him at length in the fore-hold. He was crouching under the hatchway, covered with a sack; and, as the light fell on his face, Callendar was shocked to see that it was a mask of blood. Although he knew the man well, he could scarcely recognise him.

"Is that Captain Callendar?" called Howes, to whom the voice was familiar.

"It is," answered the captain, and told him to come forward.

Howes then called to Smith, who crawled from his hiding-place farther back. He, too, was in a fearful state, covered with blood and dirt, and clad only in a torn shirt.

On his appearance Stewart started back dismayed. "I thought you were dead," he stammered. And added: "I now believe you were innocent. I am very sorry for having hurt you. It was God spared your life."

Then, faced by these two victims of his delusion,

he fell once more into a panic ; and in order to calm him Callendar found it necessary to persuade Howes to allow his hands to be lightly lashed.

Both Smith and Howes were then removed to the *Mary Stubbs*, and two fresh hands were sent aboard the brig to work her home. Even now Callendar, though sorely puzzled, does not seem to have realised the truth, for in spite of all that had happened he left Stewart in charge of his ship.

For a couple of days the two vessels sailed on in company without mishap ; but on the morning of the 25th, when Callendar went aboard the *Mary Russell*, he found Stewart very agitated. His life, he believed, was not safe ; the two men from the schooner were plotting to murder him in revenge for what he had done. Disregarding Callendar's assurances, he rushed into the main chains and flung himself overboard, crying, " Lord, help me ! " He was picked up by the schooner's boat, which was towing astern, but scarcely had he regained the deck than he broke loose and jumped into the water again. Once more he was saved, despite his struggles.

It was now only too obvious that the man was mad, and to preserve him from suicide his legs were tied. But now the two seamen from the *Mary Stubbs* spoke up. They protested against being left alone with three boys and a raving lunatic ; and to pacify them Callendar had to

take Stewart back with him to his own ship.

Hardly had they set foot on the deck of the *Mary Stubbs* than Stewart caught sight of Howes. At once he broke away from Callendar, bolted below into the cabin, and presently returned, armed with a case knife and fork. Nor would he lay down these weapons until Callendar had ordered both Smith and Howes below and made a pretence of battening down the hatches on them.

The ships were now close to the Irish coast, sailing in a light mist. As the morning wore on the breeze lifted and disclosed three small Irish sloops near by. Before anyone could interfere Stewart again leaped over the side and swam for the nearest of the three sloops. He reached her, and was taken aboard ; and evidently he managed to persuade her captain that his life had been threatened, for the sloop at once bore away from the *Mary Stubbs*.

The brig and the schooner continued their voyage, and at midnight came to anchor in Cork harbour.

Stewart did not stay long in the sloop. Very soon he began to suspect that the crew had designs against him, and when an opportunity arose he took to the water once more, swimming this time to a fishing-boat which was lying off Cape Clear. The fishermen landed him and handed him over to the coastguard, and they in turn passed him on to the police. A day or two

later he was safely lodged in the County Gaol.

We can imagine the amazement and horror of the people of Cork when the news began to go round of the arrival in port of the *Mary Russell*, with her freight of corpses, her blood-bespattered cabin and her mutilated survivors. The city was thrown into a ferment, and the inquest was held amid scenes of painful excitement, several of the relatives of the murdered men being present, and feeling running very high against Captain Stewart. As a result of the verdict of the Coroner's jury he was committed for trial at the Cork Assizes on August 11th.

At the trial the defence entered a plea of 'Not Guilty,' but no attempt was made to prove mutiny on the part of the crew; it was merely claimed that the captain, when he committed these horrible acts, was insane. The jury, in their verdict, upheld this view; they found the prisoner 'Not Guilty' on the ground of mental derangement; and he was ordered to be confined in a lunatic asylum for life or during His Majesty's pleasure.

That is almost the end of a very gruesome tale. Stewart lived on for more than twenty years. At first he occupied himself with religious exercises, and in teaching his children, who were allowed to visit him. Later his attacks became more frequent, though he had long, lucid intervals when he was tortured with remorse for his dreadful crimes. He prayed incessantly, and one

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pathetic statement which he was fond of making has been recorded. " Though I am a Protestant," he would say, " I cannot help sometimes praying for the souls of my poor men."





**SEA MESSAGES AND MYSTERIES**



## SEA MESSAGES AND MYSTERIES

### I

As a means of communication at sea the bottle-message is scarcely to be commended, either for speed or for accuracy of transmission. Not that there is any question of commendation, since no one is likely to use a floating bottle for the carrying of his message if he can send it in any other way ; and nowadays, when most ships carry a wireless installation, that other way is generally available. Frequently, of course, it has happened that messages, placed in bottles and dropped overboard, have been washed ashore in the fulness of time, carrying sometimes a few idle words of greeting, but occasionally the tragic story of some fearful disaster in mid-ocean.

Sometimes these messages have taken a very long time to find a recipient. On a wild night in March of 1825 the *Kent* Indiaman was burning in the Bay of Biscay. Her crew and passengers stood by on her decks in the expectation that at any moment the fire would reach the powder magazine and blow the ship and all in her sky-high. During those hours of anxious waiting an officer—Major Macgregor, of the 31st

Foot—committed the following message to the waters :

‘ The ship the *Kent* Indiaman is on fire. Elizabeth, Joanna and myself commit our spirits into the hands of our blessed Redeemer whose grace enables us to be quite composed in the awful prospect of entering Eternity.

‘ D. W. W. MACGREGOR.

‘ 1st March, 1825, Bay of Biscay.’

Eighteen months afterwards, when the survivors of the *Kent* had long been safely in port, the bottle containing this message was picked up at Barbadoes by a man bathing on the shore.

Probably, however, for every genuine message that reaches land there are at least a hundred fakes. Some great ship is lost at sea. Not a soul survives to tell the tale. There is no clue to explain how the disaster occurred ; the ship has disappeared, carrying her secret with her. To a certain type of mind these circumstances seem to offer an irresistible temptation to try a hoax ; and no regard for the feelings of the relatives of those who sailed in the missing vessel is allowed to stand in the way. A message is forged, placed in a bottle and cast on the waters, to be eventually found by some person who, in all good faith, takes it to the authorities. For awhile its genuineness may be in doubt ; hope that is almost dead revives ; conjecture begins



anew ; and perhaps considerable trouble and expense are incurred before the forgery is exposed. That sort of bottle-message is a cruel and senseless form of practical joke.

Within recent years the *Waratah*<sup>1</sup> is a case in point. She was a big Blue Anchor liner of over 16,000 tons, which disappeared in a storm during the summer of 1909 somewhere between Durban and Cape Town. How and why she foundered was and remains a mystery ; and for long it was thought that she might have been disabled and be drifting about off one of the steamer routes.<sup>2</sup> It is a fact that no fewer than five bottle-messages purporting to come from the *Waratah*, and every one of them a fake, were picked up at different points on the Australian coast ; and hope was only finally relinquished after an exhaustive search had been carried out by three warships and two other steamers.

Another disappearance at sea, which had its sequel of bottle-messages, was that of the *Huronian*. She was a freight ship of 4,430 tons, belonging to the Allan Line. On February 11th, 1902, she left Glasgow for St. John, Newfoundland, loaded with coal and a general cargo, and

<sup>1</sup> See *Mysteries of the Sea*, by the same author.

<sup>2</sup> The other day I heard a story about the *Waratah* the authenticity of which I cannot guarantee, but which is perhaps worth repeating.

Shortly after the disappearance of the ship a man was found wandering in the veld, close to the coast and not far from Port Elizabeth. He had nothing by which he could be identified, and could give no account of himself other than a very vague intimation that he had come ashore from the *Waratah*. No further information could be obtained from him, nor could anything be discovered about him ; and as the poor man was quite out of his mind he was sent to the Grahamstown Asylum.

This story should be accepted with the greatest reserve.

carrying one passenger. From the moment that her pilot left her at Tail of Bank, Greenock, she was never seen again, and it is supposed that she must have foundered in mid-Atlantic during a storm. For a considerable period after she had become due it was hoped that news of her might yet be received. On March 12th a wreck was reported on the east end of the bar of Sable Island ; and this was at first believed to be the *Huronian*. But when the Canadian Government sent the steamer *Aberdeen* to investigate, the wreck in question was found to be an old hulk that had been lying there for a long time. On March 17th, again, a definite report reached Halifax that an Allan liner, thought to be the *Huronian*, had been signalled, and was heading for the harbour of St. John, New Brunswick. But a few days later the news was found to be false.

In April, at the request of the Allan Line, the British Government sent out two cruisers, the *Thames* and the *Bellona*, to make a thorough search of all the waters into which the *Huronian*, if disabled and unmanageable, might have drifted. And when both ships returned without having come across a trace of the missing vessel, her loss was reluctantly presumed. A Board of Trade enquiry was held at Glasgow on September 24th and 25th, but was unable, on the evidence brought, to reach any conclusion that might account for the disaster. Apparently the *Huronian* was a perfectly stable and sea-worthy ship ; she had

sailed fully manned, under an experienced captain and competent officers ; nor was there any reason why she should have failed to weather the gales—severe as these had been—which she was known to have met.

Now for the sequel of bottle-messages. In the middle of June, 1902, a letter was received by someone in Ship Harbour, Nova Scotia, containing a scrap of paper alleged to have been found in a bottle ; the bottle had been picked up on June 2nd off Owls Head, forty-five miles east of Halifax. The message, which was unsigned, consisted of these words :

‘ The S.S. *Huronian* turned over in the Atlantic on Sunday night. In a small boat, fourteen of us.’

That this was a genuine document is possible, though not very probable. By June most people had come to the conclusion that the *Huronian* must have foundered, so that there was nothing original in the suggestion. It is, moreover, exceedingly unlikely that if she had turned turtle during an Atlantic storm there would have been time or opportunity to get a boat away ; and, even if one had been launched, it is at least as unlikely that it could have lived for an hour in a storm that was violent enough to overpower a comparatively big ship like the *Huronian*.

A second bottle-message, with a clearer ring

of truth about it, was picked up in 1907, five years after the disappearance of the ship. A man was walking on the seashore at Castlerock, on the north coast of Ireland, when he came upon a bottle apparently cast up by the waves. In it he found the following message :

‘ *Huronian* sinking fast. Top-heavy. One side under water. Good-bye, mother and sister.  
‘ CHARLES M’FALL, greaser.’

It is, of course, impossible to say whether this was or was not a forgery. Although the Board of Trade enquiry decided that the *Huronian* was quite stable, she may have been thought top-heavy by her crew—as are plenty of ships. M’Fall at any rate, was a real person, for, when the records were consulted, it was found that a ‘greaser’ (or fireman) of that name had sailed in the *Huronian*, and that he had had a mother and sister ashore. What, however, is most puzzling to the ordinary man is that anyone, in a moment of such stress as when a ship is foundering, should go to the trouble of writing a letter, finding a bottle, sealing it securely, and throwing it overboard. You would suppose that in such a situation, when the end is but a matter of minutes, a man’s mind would be occupied with other matters.

There was a very interesting example of a genuine sea-message—not a bottle-message, but

akin to it—in the 'eighties of last century. Two boys were playing on a lonely stretch of the beach at Fremantle, Western Australia, when they saw a large bird, nearly dead, struggling feebly in the water close to the shore. One of the boys waded in, caught hold of a wing, and dragged the bird to land, where it died almost at once. It had tried to swallow a large fish, which had stuck in its beak and choked it. The boys ran off to fetch their father along to admire their discovery ; and he, on arrival, identified the bird as an albatross. When he examined it he was surprised to find, fastened round its neck, a collar roughly made of a metal strip taken apparently from an old tin of preserved food. On detaching this strip he could see that on it some words had been punched with a sharp instrument ; and these he deciphered as follows :

*'Treize naufragés sont réfugiés sur les Iles Crozets. Au secours pour l'amour de Dieu.'*<sup>1</sup>

A date followed, twelve days previous to the day on which the bird came ashore.

The tin collar was at once sent to the naval authorities, who decided that the message was probably genuine. Unfortunately, they allowed themselves to be hampered by red tape. The Crozets are a small group of uninhabited islands belonging to France, and lying in the extreme south

<sup>1</sup> 'Thirty sailors have taken refuge on the Crozet Islands. Help, for the love of God.'



it was claimed, by one of the passengers to a relative, was published in the Press. It stated that the *President* had been damaged in a storm, and been driven by stress of weather to Madeira. On the day after the appearance of this letter the greatest excitement was caused in Liverpool by the news that a large black steamer was waiting outside the port for high water. For a few hours everyone believed that the *President* had at last returned, and bitter was the disappointment when later on in the day it was found that the waiting steamer was quite another ship, and that the original letter had been a hoax.

Yet, despite the disillusionment that followed, all through April and May people went on hoping. There was a rumour that the *President* had turned up at the Bermudas, and another, as late as May 24th, and following the publication of a leaf from the log of a Portuguese vessel, that she had been sighted in mid-ocean, and was adrift with her machinery disabled. Finally, a Cork newspaper announced the finding of a bottle at sea. In it was a scrap of paper, signed by Mr. Tyrone Power, a well-known comedian who had sailed in the *President*. He wrote—if it was he—that the ship was going down fast. Whether the message was true or false, there can be little doubt that she foundered in an Atlantic storm, during the month of March 1841, and that her reported reappearances were—one and all—entirely fictitious.

A little later there was the case of the *City of Glasgow*, sailing from Liverpool to Philadelphia with 111 cabin and saloon passengers, 293 steerage passengers and a crew of 76. She steamed out of the Mersey on March 1st, 1854, and was not heard of again. Although her fate was never ascertained, we may guess that some such disaster overtook her as, nearly fifty years later, came out of the quiet night upon the monster *Titanic*. That, at least, is the conclusion suggested by the experiences of other steamers making the same voyage about the same time. They reported encountering an immense field of ice, extending in one direction for a distance of 347 miles. Some of the bergs rose to a height of two to three hundred feet, and so compact was the whole mass that it was described by those who saw it as like a small floating continent. One ship actually got caught in the floes, and was extricated with great difficulty, while several others had narrow escapes. So it is quite possible that the *City of Glasgow*, steaming along at night, may have run straight into this terrible barrier of ice and been sunk.

In the same year the *Lady Nugent*, a troopship, disappeared in the Indian Ocean. She was sailing from Madras to Rangoon with nearly four hundred rank and file and several women and children aboard. Her fate, too, we may conjecture. A fortnight after she had left Madras a tremendous hurricane swept the Bay of Bengal. A few

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smaller vessels were known to have foundered in it, and one or two larger ones only just managed to struggle, badly battered, into port. It is fairly certain that the *Lady Nugent* failed to weather the storm, and sank with every soul in her.

Two years later the *Pacific* added one more to the roll. She was a fine new ship, built in America for the Collins line of mail steamers, and running between New York and Liverpool. She left the latter port on January 23rd, with 45 passengers and a crew of 145 American sailors. Nothing is known of her fate. When all hope of her ever reaching port had been abandoned it was believed that she must have struck an iceberg and sunk, a catastrophe which is also supposed to have overtaken the *City of Boston*, a fine Inman liner which disappeared in 1870.

Within more recent years we have the tragic case of the *Camorta*, which left Kalingapatam for Rangoon on May 2nd, 1902, carrying as many as 700 passengers, and was never seen again; of the *Naronic* and the *Georgia*; and, of course, of the *Waratah*, perhaps the most interesting of them all, the story of whose disappearance has been fully told in *Mysteries of the Sea*.

Another puzzle, as baffling as any of these, is the vanishing in May 1920 of the Japanese steamer *Tenzan Maru*. She was sailing from Monte Video to Antwerp with a cargo of wheat, calling at Rio on the way; and somewhere between Monte Video



and Rio she disappeared. Her case is particularly curious, because she was a new ship, with up-to-date equipment, and fitted with wireless; yet not a hint of her fate has ever transpired.

Wireless, of course, besides superseding the bottle-message, is the great preventive of ocean mysteries. In the old days a ship could so easily disappear. When in difficulties she could summon no one to her assistance, inform no one of her impending fate. In fact, what really claims our wonder is not that so many, but that so few, ships have gone to the bottom without leaving a trace behind them. When, for example, the *Drummond Castle* sank, only two men escaped with their lives; eliminate these two, and you have another mystery of the sea. But to-day such cases must necessarily be rare. The ship may sink; the casualty roll may be sufficiently fearful; but generally, before the end, the wireless message has gone out to tell the world the story of the tragedy.



THE TRAGEDY OF THE SEVEN HUNTERS



## THE TRAGEDY OF THE SEVEN HUNTERS

OUT in the North Atlantic, uninhabited, seldom visited and often storm-bound, lie the Seven Hunters—better known, perhaps, as the Flannan Islands. They are little more than rocks, for the largest of them measures only five hundred by two hundred yards ; and they are among the loneliest spots in the world. Seventeen miles to the east of them is the island of Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides ; but to the west there is no land between them and the coast of North America.

The seven islands differ little in appearance. Grey cliffs of gneiss tower above the waters, to a height that varies between one hundred and fifty and two hundred feet ; and the tops are crowned with smooth stretches of turf, starred with sea-pink and buttercup and ragged robin. They have always been a great haunt of sea-fowl, and especially of puffins, which, orange-beaked and orange-footed, sit in row on solemn row about the cliffs. Except for these, the islands remained for long years untenanted, though in bygone times, when the grazing was poor in Lewis, sheep used to be taken across and left on them to fend for themselves for a month or two.

To talk of the history of such rocks as these is perhaps a misuse of language ; yet the islands



possess both a ruin and a tradition. The ruin, which is on Eilean Mor, the largest of the group, is that of a little chapel ; and the tradition has it that there, in the seventeenth century, St. Flannan, the bishop of Killaloe, made his home and dwelt for many years in seclusion from the world.

In the nineteenth century, however, the Flannan Islands began to have other associations which were far from saintly ; they became a minor problem. Situated, as they are, on or close to the route of vessels bound by the Butt of Lewis for the north coast of Scotland, or through the Pentland Firth for some Scandinavian port, they were a dangerous obstacle on a dark night or in thick weather. Many a ship crashed on to those unlighted rocks ; and small was the chance of escape of those aboard when they found themselves caught between the fury of the waves and the grey cliffs of Flannan. Even if they were so fortunate as to reach the shore and to clamber up on to one of the little grassy plateaux, in certain seasons of the year they might remain there undiscovered for days and even weeks, until, perhaps, they exchanged death by drowning for death by exposure or starvation.

Towards the close of last century, therefore, as the result of a good deal of representation and of more than one disaster, it was decided to build a lighthouse on the Flannan Islands. The task of constructing it was both laborious and dangerous ; the sea was seldom really calm, and it was

necessary to blast landing-places out of the solid rock, to erect cranes and to hoist all the materials required to the top of the cliff. Consequently the work, which was put in hand by the Northern Lighthouse Board in 1895, was not completed until the month of December 1899. The lighthouse was placed on Eilean Mor, close to the ruin of St. Flannan's chapel, and two hundred feet above the sea; and in the tower, which was seventy-five feet high, was installed a light of 140,000 candle-power, visible for a distance of forty miles. Such was the station that had been established for exactly a year when the extraordinary tragedy took place which cost three men their lives, baffled every attempt at investigation, and still remains an unsolved mystery of the seas.

The lighthouse was manned by a staff of four men, one of whom was always away on leave; so that the work was arranged in a continuous shift, each man doing six weeks on and then taking a fortnight off. In order to [work the reliefs the Northern Lighthouse Board's steamer, the *Hesperus*, visited the station, weather permitting, once a fortnight.

On December 26th, 1900, when the *Hesperus* appeared off the Flannan Islands, the fortnightly relief was some days overdue. Probably it had been delayed by the stormy weather; at all events the islands had last been visited on December 6th, nearly three weeks before. The men left on duty at that date were James Ducat, Thomas Marshall

and Donald McArthur ; and the fourth man, Joseph Moore, was now returning to the islands in the *Hesperus* to relieve one of the others whose turn it was to take a spell of leave. The programme was according to routine. After landing Moore, with letters and provisions for the station, and embarking the other man, the steamer was to return to Loch Roag in the afternoon.

Some account has already been given of the general character of the islands ; a few details about Eilean Mor, the rock on which the lighthouse was built, may be added. It is, as has been said, the largest of the group. It is egg-shaped in appearance, and has been described as like a larger edition of the Bass Rock. At its highest point is the lighthouse itself, from which a grassy slope stretches to the edge of the cliffs. When the construction of the station was begun it was found necessary to cut two landing-places out of the rock ; one of these was on the west and one on the east side of the island, so that on most days, if there was not actually a gale blowing, it would be possible to land materials, stores or reliefs at one of them. At each landing-place a zigzag stair had been cut up the cliff, and a crane and a trolly tramway had been installed.

On this particular day the *Hesperus* hove-to off the east landing and hoisted the usual signals. To the surprise of those aboard, however, no answering signals were shown from the lighthouse ; and—which was more significant—it was evident from

the appearance of the landing that none of the usual preparations had been made for the reception of the steamer. It was possible, of course, that the ship, being overdue, was not expected ; yet she should have been sighted while still at some distance from the island, and it was surprising that not one of the three keepers should be visible.

At first, however, the deserted appearance of the island aroused no apprehension of any disaster. A boat was manned, and put off for the east landing with Moore, the assistant keeper who was returning to duty. Still no one appeared. In the absence of anyone at the landing-place to lend a hand, Moore had a difficult jump to make in order to reach the shore. He managed it, and, leaving his companions in the boat, set off at once up the zigzag path leading to the station. When he arrived there he found the entrance gate and outside doors closed. Pushing them open, he entered. The place was empty. In the living-room the clock had stopped, and, although it was mid-winter, no fire was lit. He looked into the bedroom, thinking that perhaps the men had overslept themselves ; but there was no one there.

Puzzled, and by this time more than a little alarmed, he hurried back to the landing-place to obtain assistance ; and on hearing his account of his experiences two more men scrambled ashore and joined him. The three men then made a thorough and systematic search of the island and the lighthouse premises. But they found no one.

There was not a trace of the missing keepers ; there was scarcely a hint of their fate. The Seven Hunters had claimed and taken them, as though resenting the invasion of their long solitude ; the men had simply and completely disappeared.

The search did not take very long, and, though nothing was found to indicate an explanation of the tragedy, certain points of interest and significance were noted. In the first place, there was the slate, on which the records were kept by Ducat, the principal keeper. The last entry had been made at 9 a.m. on Saturday, December 15th. It was therefore fairly safe to assume that the calamity, whatever its precise nature might have been, took place some time in the course of that day. But a further investigation of the premises enabled the time to be fixed more closely. The morning's work had evidently been completed. The big lamps had been trimmed, the oil fountains and canteens were full, and the lens and machinery had been cleaned since their last night of work. In the kitchen, too, everything was tidy, and the pots and pans had been washed. Thus it was pretty clear that the mysterious tragedy must have taken place during the late morning or the afternoon of the 15th. We may mention that this conclusion was subsequently supported by Captain Holman, of the Steamship *Archer*, who stated that he had passed the Flannan Islands at midnight on December 15th/16th ; that he had been surprised not to pick up the light ; and that the course he



followed was such that, in the prevailing weather, he could not have failed to see the light if it had been burning.

That point, therefore, was established. But it did not bring a solution much nearer. One further discovery was made in the lighthouse. On a careful examination of the missing men's possessions it was found that Ducat's and Marshall's sea-boots and oilskins were missing ; and Moore—who was, of course, acquainted with his comrades' habits—declared that the men only wore these articles when they were visiting one of the landings.

Since the key to the mystery was not to be found in the lighthouse building, the searchers next turned their attention to the exterior, in the hope that the landing-places might supply the clue which they were seeking. They took the east landing first—the one at which they had come ashore. Everything there was in perfect order, and the ropes, which had been coiled and stored there after the relief on December 6th, were all in place.

At the west landing-place, however, traces of the recent gales were found. The crane, which had been installed on a concrete platform 70 feet above the sea, was, it is true, undamaged. The jib was lowered and secured to the rock, the canvas covering the wire rope on the barrel was firmly lashed, and there was no sign that the men had been attempting to do anything there.



Nevertheless, during the late storms the waves must have piled themselves up against the cliff at this spot, for a wooden box, containing ropes, crane handles and odds and ends, which was kept in a crevice of the rocks 40 feet above the crane platform and 110 feet above sea-level, had been washed away. In the process it had been torn open ; several of the ropes had been flung down and scattered over the rocks near by ; and some of them had been caught and entangled in the crane. There were other signs of the violence of the storm. The iron railings running round the platform and up the zigzag stair had been displaced and twisted, and a block of stone, weighing upwards of a ton, had been dislodged and swept some distance to the left, coming to rest on the concrete path just above the landing-place.

On examining the railings protecting the path the searchers thought for a moment that they had found a clue to the fate of the missing men. The life-buoy, which was always kept fastened to the railings against an emergency, was gone. But on closer inspection it was observed that the ropes securing it had not been touched, and that pieces of canvas were still adhering to them ; so that it seemed more likely that the sea, pouring through the railings, had torn the life-buoy bodily from its fastenings and carried it away. We get some idea of the force and fury of the storm when we recall that this happened at a

height of more than a hundred feet above the level of the sea.

If what was found at the west landing provided no clues, at least it gave certain indications, which, when combined with the results of the search of the lighthouse premises, pointed to a possible explanation.

December had been a month of storms ; during one of these the waves off Flannan had risen so high as to damage objects a hundred feet above the sea ; when the disaster occurred the keepers—or two of them, at any rate—had been dressed to visit one of the landings. On this rather meagre foundation a theory was constructed ; the men, it was assumed, fearing that all was not made fast on the west landing, had attempted to reach it during one of the storms ; and they had been blown off the rock by the power of the gale, or swept away by an exceptionally high wave.

Such a theory, though it received some support when first the news of the disaster reached the mainland, was not seriously tenable. To anyone with any knowledge of lighthouse work it was inconceivable that three experienced keepers should have ventured on to one of the landings when a storm was raging. But there was a stronger objection than this. The important point, of course, is the weather ; and of this we have a complete record in the log kept by Ducat and found by the search-party. From this it

appears that on December 12th and 13th a gale blew from the west, but that on the 14th, the day before the disaster, the wind dropped appreciably and was scarcely more than a stiff breeze. It blew a gale again on the 20th, as we know from other sources, but on the 15th the weather must have been by comparison calm. When, therefore, the men disappeared, the damage had probably already been done, and certainly the storm was over. There was no direct connection between the storm, the damage on the west landing and the disappearance of the keepers.

But, having rejected this explanation, let us put forward another ; and, in the light of such evidence as is available, try to reconstruct the tragedy as it may have happened. On the 12th and 13th the men were storm-bound within the lighthouse building. They could hear the roar of the tempest outside ; they could, perhaps, see something of the tremendous seas that were running ; their little fortress, high though it was perched, must have been lashed by the spray of those mountainous seas ; and possibly the keepers guessed that some damage would be done on the west landing, which was exposed to the full violence of the gale. But so long as the storm lasted they could do nothing. On the 14th the wind moderated, but probably the sea was still too rough for the landings to be visited in safety. On the morning of the 15th, however, the weather had become calmer, and all three men went down

to the west landing to see what had happened there during the storm.

So far our task has been easy. But at this point we reach the crux of the problem. The men are at the landing-place. What disaster can overtake them there on a comparatively calm day? Conjecture, of course, is possible. One of the men may have slipped and fallen into the sea, and the others may have lost their lives in attempting to save him. Yet, recalling that the crane platform and the path were littered with ropes from the wooden box which had been swept away by the waves, it is hard to believe that the men would have jumped into the sea when they could more easily and safely have thrown a rope to their companion. But perhaps he was disabled? Even so, why did both men follow him? Surely one of them would have remained on shore with a rope?

Having brought the matter to a deadlock, let us now produce a possible solution, which, though it may not commend itself to everybody, does cover most of the facts. At the time the explanation did not suggest itself; the lighthouse had only been completed a year when the tragedy occurred, and consequently no one knew very much about the island and its ways. Later, however, when the post had been established for some time, a curious phenomenon was discovered. It was found that off the west landing, in quite calm weather, the sea would suddenly and

unexpectedly rise to a very high level. Whatever freak of the tides may be the cause, the effect is remarkable ; it is almost as though a volcanic upheaval had taken place in the depths of the ocean, or as though some huge marine monster was convulsing the waters. At one moment the waves will be washing idly round the base of the rocks ; at the next they will surge forward and upward ; and, if there is anyone standing within their range at the moment, they will catch him, and drag him back and drown him. On several occasions this strange upheaval has been observed, and more than once since 1900 the keepers of Flannan have narrowly escaped being caught in it and drowned.

This, then, we may conjecture to have been the fate of the three lost men. Unwarned, and deceived by the fairness of the weather, they went down the path towards the west landing-place ; and the quiet ocean rose swiftly and engulfed them.



OF THE COMPANY OF THE PRIVATEERS



## OF THE COMPANY OF THE PRIVATEERS

### I

WHEN most of the exploits of the Imperial German Navy are forgotten, men will still recall the adventures of the *Emden*. Daring seamanship and humanity towards non-combatants are no less admirable in an enemy than in a friend; and few will deny to Captain von Müller and his company their due share of all these qualities. Indeed, it is hard to associate them with those others—their comrades—who, later in the war, ‘sank without a trace,’ sending defenceless merchantmen—crews, passengers and all—to the bottom of the sea. Rather should we judge them akin to Francis Drake, Paul Jones and all the gallant company of privateers, British, French and American.

The *Emden* was a light cruiser of 3,592 tons, with a speed on trial of 24 knots, and an armament of ten 4.1 inch guns. At the beginning of August 1914, she was lying in Tsingtau, Germany’s Naval base in Far Eastern waters; but on the 3rd of the month—the day before Britain declared war on Germany—she slipped out under orders to join Admiral von Spee’s squadron in the south.

She was only just in time. Directly war broke out, Vice-Admiral Jerram, the British Commander-in-Chief in China, made it his first business to close Tsingtau ; and between his squadron and that of Captain Fitzmaurice the *Emden* narrowly escaped capture at the very beginning of her career. However, she got away, and, steaming at full speed for the south, reached Pagan Island, not far from the German wireless station at Yapp, in the Caroline group, on August 12th. This was her appointed *rendezvous* with Admiral von Spee and the South Pacific Squadron. On her arrival, however, she found that the Admiral had changed his plans. In view of the threatening attitude of Japan, who actually declared war some ten days later, it was hopeless to return to Tsingtau ; the squadron might get in, but would certainly never get out again. Von Spee had accordingly decided to cross the Pacific to South American waters, where he proposed to deal with Admiral Cradock and generally make himself unpleasant. For such an enterprise the *Emden*, with her light armament, was not likely to prove so useful as if she were left behind to do a little commerce-destroying by herself.

Accordingly, when von Spee turned east on the voyage that was to take him to his victory at Coronel and to a fighting end off the Falkland Islands, he sent the *Emden* west. She was, somehow or other, to break through into the Indian Ocean. Arrived there, she was to do as

much damage as she could, for as long as she could. There was, of course, only one possible end to such an adventure—she would be hunted without respite, and sooner or later the avengers would run her down. But in the meantime she would have her crowded hour, and, if her career was short, like that of the old pirates it would also be merry.

With these instructions Captain von Müller left Pagan Island on his desperate enterprise. His first task—since surprise was the essence of the business—was to reach the scene of operations unobserved. This was not so easy as it sounds, for in order to pass into the Indian Ocean from the Pacific it was necessary to enter the frequented waters of the Malay Archipelago, to thread his way circumspectly about a maze of islands, and finally to bolt through one of a number of comparatively narrow passages. However, he contrived to make the journey undetected, and on August 23rd the *Emden* stole through the Molucca Straits and round the south coast of Java. Thus, unexpected and most unwelcome, she burst into the peaceful waters of the Indian Ocean.

Immediately thereafter von Müller's tactics were fairly simple. He would lie off one of the main steamer routes, pounce on a few victims, scuttle them, and before the alarm could be given disappear again into the trackless wastes of the ocean, where he might steam for days without sighting another ship. It sounded feasible. He



had secured his surprise ; he was within striking distance of the great waterways to Calcutta, to the Far East and to Australia ; he had speed ; and he was not dependent on the caprices of winds. But if he had certain advantages over the old privateers, there were also drawbacks which they had never had to face. There was the wireless telegraph, by which his presence could be made known and a concentration of his pursuers effected in an incredibly short time. Also there was the coal question. On the kind of work in front of her the *Emden's* fuel consumption was certain to be enormous. With luck she might obtain—as, in fact, she did—fresh supplies from some of her victims. But, as this source was doubtful, it had been necessary to arrange meetings in mid-ocean or off secluded islands with a number of German colliers that had been equipped and sent out for the purpose. This was bound to affect her movements, to compel her to be in certain specified spots on specified dates ; nor could her own wireless be used to alter arrangements once made, since her whereabouts would thus be betrayed to the enemy.

We may be sure that von Müller set about his task with a clear idea of both his advantages and his difficulties ; and it must be owned that from the outset he made excellent use of his opportunities. His first objective was Ceylon, where he hoped to intercept vessels bound for the Bay of Bengal. In the whole of the Bay there was not a single

British cruiser, and so secure from enemy interference was the area thought to be that none of the precautions that afterwards became customary were observed by passing vessels. They kept to the old routes ; at night they steamed along with all their lights ablaze ; and as a result the *Emden* began her career with some very easy victims. The first was a Greek collier, the *Pontoporos*, carrying 6,000 tons of Indian coal ; and, though Greece was a neutral, von Müller had no compunction in capturing and retaining her—and her coal. Afterwards, in quick succession, she stopped the *Indus*, the *Killin* and the *Diplomat*. All these ships were on the direct track, took her for a British cruiser, and steamed innocently to meet her. After taking off their crews she sank them by gunfire.

Her next venture was less fortunate. She cut out an Italian steamer, the *Loredano*. Now Italy was one of the most important of the neutral Powers, and it was not advisable to give offence by tampering with her shipping. So von Müller merely stopped her and asked her captain to take over his prisoners ; and when the captain refused he was told to continue his voyage. But, instead of doing so, he turned and made back to the Hooghly. On the way he met the *City of Rangoon*, a big new ship with a rich cargo, and warned her of the danger ahead ; whereupon she, being equipped with wireless, promptly gave the alarm.

The cat was now out of the bag. Every ship

with a Marconi installation and within broadcasting distance picked up the message and scurried for port ; and in every harbour of India and Ceylon the sailings were held up. The *Emden* was to make many more victims ; but the hunt had begun. Directly the news reached Singapore, three cruisers, the *Hampshire*, the *Chikuma* and the *Yarmouth*, were hurried west to the coast of Ceylon.

Meanwhile the *Emden* had gone to False Bay to coal. On her way there she ran into the *Trabock* and the *Clan Matheson*, which, having no wireless, had not been warned. They were promptly sunk. Two blank days followed, and the absence of ships in such frequented waters showed that the secret was out. Very soon, too, von Müller, listening in, began to pick up wireless messages which indicated that in the near future the neighbourhood was likely to become exceedingly unhealthy for a certain German cruiser.

The *Emden's* next move, therefore, was to shift her hunting-ground and to cross the Bay of Bengal to the Gulf of Martaban, where she coaled under way, at a point not very far from Rangoon. Here she listened to further wireless conversations among her pursuers, from which it appeared that several British cruisers were working up from the south, and that she had only just missed one of them, the *Hampshire*, at the mouth of the Gulf. Von Müller now decided

to double on his tracks, and by September 22nd he was back off the Malabar coast again. Here he carried out a spectacular *coup*. He bombarded Madras, the third city of India. The damage done was not great. Two tanks belonging to the Burmah Oil Company were destroyed, five people were killed and a dozen or so wounded. But the moral effect of the achievement on a population largely composed of ignorant and credulous people was tremendous. Thousands of the inhabitants of Madras are said to have fled into the interior, and for a season the wildest rumours startled the bazaars of India. Two months after the bombardment the present writer happened to be at Delhi, hundreds of miles from the coast. One day a strange and alarming story was being told and believed in the native city. It was said that the *Emden* (then lying a riddled wreck on the Cocos) was sailing up the river Jumna to the capture of Delhi Fort. The panic, however, was speedily averted. The next day the Indian Cavalry Regiment stationed in the city went a few miles out to train. That was the story, but the wiseacres of the bazaar knew better: it had gone out to deal with the *Emden*. And when in due course it returned, rumour had it that all was well and that the terrible German cruiser had been captured.

But, apart from the mischief which nonsense of this kind was liable to make among ignorant folk, the *Emden's* success in eluding capture

and reappearing in a quarter supposed to be once more clear had very serious results. For a time all the sailings to and from India were thoroughly disorganised—a bad business when convoys of much-needed troops were waiting at the ports. And away down in Australia, where the first contingent was ready to sail, there was much heart-burning and some delay ; so that, failing to appreciate the difficulty of rounding up one small and elusive cruiser in the mighty expanse of the Indian Ocean, public opinion was inclined to find fault with the British Navy.

At the same time it was hard not to feel a sneaking admiration for the bold outlaw, despite the trouble she was giving. Her daring, her cool disregard of the heavy odds against her, the certainty of her ultimate ruin, and especially the humanity with which, at great risk to herself, she had safeguarded the lives of the crews she captured, all commended themselves to a seafaring people. Von Müller, we decided, was an unmitigated nuisance ; but he was a bit of a sportsman.

After bombarding Madras, the *Emden* turned south towards Ceylon, again narrowly missing the *Hampshire*. She sank the *King Lud* and the *Tymeric*, and captured the *Gryfevale*, which she took on with her. She then steamed west to Minikoi, a small island to the south of the Laccadives ; and between that spot and Cape



Cormorin she made another haul. She captured the *Ribera*, the *Foyle* and—most fortunate for her—the *Buresk*. The first two, which were in ballast, she sank; but the *Buresk*, which she encountered at dead of night, steaming on the direct track with all lights burning, was a ship of 4,300 tons, bound for Hong Kong on Admiralty charter with a cargo of good Welsh coal. This was a wonderful piece of luck. Von Müller put all his prisoners in the *Gryfevale* and let her go; then he steamed south towards the Maldiv Islands, to cover his tracks and, if possible, to find a quiet spot where he might clean his ship and shift some of that excellent coal from the *Buresk's* bunkers to the *Emden's*.

His success was followed by another narrow escape. While he was coaling in the Maldives, the *Yarmouth* and the *Chikuma* were hunting round Minikoi; but when they reached the Maldives the *Emden* was off again. For a time they lost all trace of her, as well they might, for von Müller had gone far afield on another of his unexpected swoops. With superb impudence he was paying a visit to Diego Garcia, a tiny British island in the heart of the Indian Ocean. In this remote and lonely spot the inhabitants had not even heard of the war. In their innocence they gave the *Emden* (visitors being few and far between) a warm welcome, and supplied her with every facility for cleaning ship and coaling.



After this hospitable interlude she left for the north again, passing at a distance of three hundred miles one of her pursuers, coming down to Diego Garcia to look for her. Von Müller now returned to his old cruising-ground off Minikoi, where he picked up another Admiralty collier, the *Exford*, with 6,000 tons of Welsh coal aboard. This capture was the more welcome, since the British cruisers, while they had been baffled in their main quest, had been diligently rounding up the German colliers. Subsequently, between Minikoi and Ceylon, von Müller added five more ships—four of them big ones—to his bag. Shortly afterwards he had a lucky escape, the *Hampshire* and *Empress of Asia* crossing the *Emden's* course at a distance of only ten to twenty miles ahead of her; nothing but the fact that it was a showery morning, with bad visibility, saved her from capture.

Von Müller now decided to transfer his activities to the eastern waters of the Indian Ocean, where he hoped to keep a *rendezvous* with his surviving colliers. Also he had another object—nothing less than a raid on Penang, the British Malacca base. He crossed the ocean without being observed, and was off Penang on the early morning of October 28th.

In the harbour, which was guarded by a picket-boat, lay a Russian cruiser, the *Zhemchug*, and two French destroyers; while a third destroyer was out on patrol. Von Müller had painted his

ship grey—the British colour—and rigged up a dummy funnel; and when the *Emden*, thus disguised, appeared at the entrance to the channel shortly after five o'clock in the morning, the picket-boat took her in the uncertain light for a British ship, and let her pass. She ran in, hoisted German colours, and torpedoed the *Zhemchug*. Steaming on, she pounded the Russian at a range of three hundred yards, turned, gave her another torpedo, and went out again. The *Zhemchug* burst into flame and sank, and before the two French ships, taken completely by surprise, were able to fire a round, the *Emden* had vanished. The third French destroyer, however, the *Mousquet*, returning from patrol, came on her in the northern entrance, where she was actually engaged in stopping an incoming liner, the *Glenturret*. The *Mousquet*, hopelessly out-gunned, put up a stout fight, but in seven minutes the *Emden* sent her to the bottom.

This was perhaps von Müller's most audacious feat; and it was almost his last. He now made for the Cocos Islands, to the south-west of Sumatra, where he proposed to destroy the telegraph station and to meet his colliers. He reached the Cocos on the early morning of November 9th, but, though he again rigged his dummy funnel, the telegraph officials were not deceived, and while Lieutenant von Mücke, with a landing-party of fifty men, was on his way to the station, the S.O.S. went out. Before the wireless could be jammed

the *Minotaur* picked up the message ; and then the energetic officials actually got a cable through to Admiral Jerram.

Now, unknown to the *Emden*, during the previous night the first Australian convoy had passed under escort forty miles east of the Cocos, and when, just before seven o'clock, the warning messages came through, it was only fifty-five miles to the north. Captain Silver, commanding the convoy, at once detached the Australian cruiser, the *Sydney*, under Captain Glossop, to deal with the *Emden*. So while von Mücke was blowing up the wireless mast and smashing the installation on Direction Island, retribution was fast approaching. Shortly after nine o'clock smoke appeared on the horizon, and the *Emden* at once signalled the shore-party to rejoin. The strange ship came up rapidly, however, and was soon identifiable as a British cruiser. In a few minutes von Müller decided that, if he was to get sufficiently clear of the island to have room for manœuvre, he would have to abandon von Mücke and his men. He had no intention of avoiding an action, and seems to have been under the impression that the stranger was merely a weak light cruiser from the East Indies squadron. It was therefore an unpleasant surprise to the Germans when they discovered, a little later, that their opponent was the *Sydney*, of 5,400 tons, with a speed of 25.7 knots and an armament of eight 6 inch guns. With such an adversary the

*Emden* could hope neither to win in a fight nor to escape in a chase.

The action began at 9.40. It was a calm, clear morning, with every condition favourable for good shooting. The two ships raced in parallel lines between Direction Island and North Keeling, twisting, turning and doubling on their tracks. But the *Emden* never had a chance. The *Sydney* could lengthen the range at will ; she could pound her adversary from a distance, or close in and rake her with lyddite. After forty minutes of punishment the *Emden* had lost all her funnels, her foremast had been shot away, her steering gear was smashed, and her fire control positions were gone. She was badly holed, blazing fore and aft, and smothered in smoke ; but, crippled and shattered though she was, she was game to the end. When von Müller found that his ship was sinking under him, he made a last desperate attempt to beach her on North Keeling. The *Sydney* dashed in to cut her off, but was just too late, and the *Emden*, her hull shattered and her decks a shambles, but her flag still flying, ran hard aground on a reef.

The *Sydney* then left her for awhile. When the fight began the *Buresk*, the captured collier which von Müller had brought with him across the Indian Ocean, had made off to the north. The *Sydney* now went after her, and soon overhauled her ; but, though she surrendered at once, the Germans scuttled her before the prize crew

could take possession. Captain Glossop then returned to deal with the stranded *Emden*. It was four o'clock in the afternoon before he got back to North Keeling Island, and the *Emden*, helpless wreck though she was, still flew German colours; and, since she made no answer to his repeated demands for her surrender, Captain Glossop was forced to open fire on her again. Von Müller has been criticised for allowing this further and unnecessary loss of life, but it is hard to find fault with such heroic obstinacy. After two salvos had rent the stricken ship she hoisted a white flag and hauled down her colours. The fight was over.

Night was now approaching, and there were still von Mücke and the landing-party to be rounded up. On his way back to the Cocos for this purpose, however, Captain Glossop saw a number of Germans in the water, who had been blown out of the *Emden* during the engagement, but had somehow contrived to keep themselves afloat. He stopped to rescue them. He could hardly have done otherwise, but the delay was unfortunate, for when he reached Direction Island once more it was quite dark and the landing-party had disappeared.

## II

Let us follow the adventures of von Mücke and his men, since, although the *Emden's* race was



run, there remained the astounding sequel—the escape of fifty Germans from a small island off the coast of Sumatra. Von Mücke tells the story in his book, *The Ayesha*, which has never been published in England; and, though we may suspect him of occasional exaggeration, his narrative is probably in the main correct.

The landing-party consisted of three officers, six petty officers and forty men. They went ashore in a steam launch and two cutters, taking with them a couple of machine-guns. On landing, they went straight up to the telegraph station, where they found a stout gentleman who handed over his keys, and on learning von Mücke's name, congratulated him on receiving the Iron Cross; the news had just come over the wireless. The staff made no attempt to hinder the Germans in their work of destruction, which was barely completed when the *Emden* signalled to the party to rejoin. At first she merely told them to hurry up; then her siren blew; then her flag was lowered to half-mast, a sign that she was weighing anchor. Von Mücke bundled his men into the boats and started off, but he had not got very far when he saw the *Emden* steaming seawards with her battle flags flying. A moment later he heard her fire a broadside, and saw a salvo of five heavy shells strike the water near her. It was hopeless to attempt to overtake her, so von Mücke turned back to the island, where he proposed to wait until the action was over. He ordered the



English to assemble, hoisted the German flag, cleared the beach and mounted his machine-guns. The English, he says, were quite friendly ; they even approached one of the officers and asked him if he played tennis ! But perhaps von Mücke mistook a piece of gentle sarcasm for a genuine enquiry.

Meanwhile the two cruisers had come into view, fighting furiously ; and presently vanished to the north in the direction of Keeling Island. When, later, they reappeared, it was clear that the *Emden's* hour had struck, and that the landing-party would never rejoin her. A new plan was now necessary, and one soon suggested itself to von Mücke. He had noticed, lying in the harbour, a three-masted schooner, the *Ayesha*, belonging to the proprietor of the island. She was a little ship of 97 tons, about 30 metres in length ; and the Germans had been on the point of sinking her when the *Emden* had signalled the recall. At one time she had been used for carrying copra from the Cocos to Batavia, but had not made a voyage for some years. Von Mücke probably exaggerates her decrepit state ; and, though he says that even the English telegraph officials warned him that she was unseaworthy, the advice was perhaps less disinterested than he imagined. At any rate, he determined to escape in her from the Cocos. First, he went aboard and examined her, and, although the man in charge assured him that the ship's

bottom was worn through, he decided that she would serve. His next task was to take in water and provisions, and in this, he declares, he received willing aid from the telegraph officials. Rumour has it, however, that the aid was not so friendly as he supposed, and that certain defects which subsequently appeared in the *Ayesha* were traceable to the obliging telegraphists.

The arrangements were necessarily made in great haste, as at any moment the *Sydney* might have returned to the island. At length all was ready. The German flag was hoisted amid cheers, and just as darkness fell the schooner was towed out clear of the reefs by the *Emden's* steam launch, which was then abandoned.

Von Mücke's plan was to shape his course for Padang, on the coast of Sumatra, some 700 miles to the north, where he hoped to get in touch with one of the *Emden's* surviving colliers. It was a hazardous enterprise. The *Ayesha* really was unsound. Her timbers were old and rotten ; her tackle broke ; her sails tore ; her gear was all in pieces. There were plenty of minor discomforts, too. All the sleeping and cooking arrangements had been designed for a crew of five men, and she was now carrying fifty. The men slept in the hold, where they were plagued by swarms of huge cockroaches ; the officers did themselves a little better in the two tiny cabins. But neither officers nor men had anything with them except what they had taken for a short trip ashore. A more

serious trouble was the water supply. When they were well away from land they found that three out of their four storage tanks were foul, and that the water in them was undrinkable. Had not a tropical rainstorm swept down on them when they had been a few days at sea they would have fared badly.

With a crazy, leaking craft, and a pump that at first refused to work, von Mücke thought it wiser to retain the *Emden's* two cutters, which he took in tow. But the ocean swell tossed them about so roughly that one of them collided with the *Ayesha* and carried away a piece of her bulwark. The offending boat was cast loose before it could do any more damage, and on the following night the other cutter broke away of her own accord. Sink or float, the *Ayesha* was all that now remained.

Apart from such episodes as these, the voyage was fairly uneventful. There were occasional thunderstorms, one of which nearly carried away the *Ayesha's* masts, and there was always a heavy swell, which kept the little ship rolling so violently that it was impossible to stand upright on the deck without support. The Germans were desperately uncomfortable, cooped up in their narrow quarters, pestered by cockroaches, short of water, living on tinned food, and lacking all the little luxuries that make life tolerable. But they kept their spirits up, and when they were not working the ship or patching the rotten

gear they lay about the deck telling stories ; and in the evenings they would sing the songs of old Germany beneath the Southern Cross.

On November 23rd they sighted the mainland of Sumatra, not very far from the Dutch port of Padang, for which they were making. Just outside territorial waters they met a small warship, which at first they feared might be British, but which later proved to be Dutch. Directly the *Ayesha* was within the three mile limit she hoisted the German flag and made for Padang.

On arrival she received a great welcome from the German ships lying in the harbour, and rather a mixed reception from the Dutch authorities, who were inclined to intern her. Von Mücke, however, insisted that she was a German warship (did she not carry two machine-guns?), and as such was entitled to stay in harbour for twenty-four hours and to procure such necessities as she required. He succeeded in establishing his point, and probably the Dutch thought they would be well rid of him. From the German vessels and from traders ashore he obtained water, provisions (including ten pigs !), ropes that would not give and sails that would not split at the slightest strain, charts of the neighbouring waters and nautical instruments.

Thus equipped, at 8 p.m. in the evening the *Ayesha* ran out of harbour to the strains of the *Wacht am Rhein* and to the cheers of all the Germans in the port. Shortly after nightfall she

was overtaken by a small boat containing two officers and two men from Padang, desirous of attaching themselves to the party.

Von Mücke's plans were now a little hazy. He still hoped to fall in with one of the colliers that had been told to *rendezvous* near the Cocos. As a matter of fact, most of these were already in British hands or at the bottom of the sea, though of this he was not aware. One of them, however, the *Choising*, of 1,700 tons, was still at large, and perhaps he had picked up at Padang a hint of her whereabouts. That this steamer and the *Ayesha* should bring off a meeting before one or both of them were captured might appear highly improbable, and that this was what actually happened may doubtless be attributed as much to good luck as to skilful management. For several days the *Ayesha* sailed about among the islands off the coast of Sumatra. Once or twice she sighted steamers which proved, on closer inspection, to be British, and with one of these she even had the impudence to exchange signals.

At length, on December 14th, in very foggy weather, the miracle happened. A steamer loomed suddenly out of the mist; it was the *Choising*.

Two days later—the delay was due to a storm which came on suddenly, separated the two ships, and carried away the *Ayesha's* foresail, staysail and fore staysail—the transfer was effected, and from the decks of the *Choising* the *Emden's*



survivors looked on while the gallant little schooner was scuttled. They watched her passing with regret, for with all her faults she had carried them for a distance of over 1,700 nautical miles.

Von Mücke and his men, though their position was now vastly better than when they were wandering about the Indian Ocean in a cranky 100-ton sailing-ship, were by no means out of their difficulties. The question was, Where was the *Choising* to go? The remains of the *Emden* lay on the reefs of North Keeling Island; the whereabouts of the *Königsberg*, the other German commerce-destroyer in Eastern waters, were unknown; and to attempt to reach the scanty and closely blockaded German settlements in East Africa appeared a hopeless enterprise. On the other hand, Turkey had now declared war, and there was the possibility that if the *Choising* could cross to the coast of Arabia and land the survivors there they would meet with friends. That course at least seemed to offer the best prospect of success; and that was what von Mücke eventually decided to try.

First of all, the *Choising* must be disguised. As she still had the black hull, white bulwarks and ochre brown trimmings of a Lloyd steamer, she was repainted to look like a Dutch vessel. Then she must receive a new identity. Hunting through an old shipping list, von Mücke found that an Italian ship, the *Shenir* of Genoa, was plying somewhere in Eastern waters. So he borrowed

her name, and manufactured a rough Italian flag out of the cabin upholstery.

With these little alterations this German-Dutch-Italian collier the *Choising-Shenir* set out upon her adventurous voyage, carefully avoiding the ordinary steamer routes that traverse the Indian Ocean. Early on the morning of January 7th, when she reached the outer waters of the Gulf of Aden, she was very close to the danger-point. In order to make her objective, the port of Hodeida, she would have first to pass unpleasantly near Aden, and next to slip unobserved through the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, where the Red Sea meets the Indian Ocean. In the middle of the straits, and commanding them, was the small island of Perim, equipped with a powerful search-light and within easy calling distance of the British war craft at Aden.

Still, the risks had to be faced. All through the day the *Choising* hung about the Gulf, in hourly dread of discovery, her crew standing by to abandon ship at any moment. Directly darkness fell, she made for the Straits at full speed, with all her lights out. There was a terrible moment, as she was passing Perim, when the revolving light from the island fell first upon two British war craft, and then upon her. For a few seconds the Germans thought they must have been seen; but when nothing happened they steamed thankfully on into the Red Sea.

They had another alarming experience as they

were approaching Hodeida. They saw, in the direction of the land, a line of lights which, in their ignorance, they supposed to be those of a dock. They were just about to make for them when to their horror the lights moved. Next morning they were to discover that their 'dock' was compounded of a French cruiser and an Italian steamer.

After this escape, von Mücke decided to land a little way down the coast, so as to find out first if the Turks were still holding Hodeida. If they were not, it would be better to rejoin the *Choising* and try some other port farther up the Red Sea. Accordingly he embarked his men in the four long-boats and effected a landing. By this time the night was far spent, and the Germans had not been very long ashore when in the light of early morning they were seen by some Arabs. Von Mücke tried to communicate with them, but as they spoke no German, and the Germans no Arabic, and both parties were very shy of each other, no progress was made. Presently a Turkish soldier on a camel arrived, signalled to the intruders to stay where they were, and rode off again. A little later he reappeared with a swarm of armed Bedouin, who showed every intention of giving battle. However, von Mücke and some of his men went forward, without weapons, to meet them, and made signs that they wanted a parley. They produced a German flag, and explained volubly (in German) who they were ;

but the Bedouin did not recognise the flag and had not the faintest idea what they were talking about. At last, in despair, von Mücke brought out a gold coin with the Kaiser's head on it. This had the desired effect. The Bedouin looked at it and exclaimed, "*Aleman!*" Whereupon the Germans all excitedly shouted, "*Aleman, Aleman!*" Weapons were at once laid aside and a tremendous fraternisation followed. At length a procession was formed, and the whole party marched in triumph into Hodeida, where the Germans found Turkish officers who could speak their language, and as hospitable a welcome as the primitive resources of the town could afford.

They stayed for some days in the neighbourhood of Hodeida, being fêted and made much of by the garrison. They celebrated the Kaiser's birthday there, with a huge banquet of mutton and rice, at the conclusion of which von Mücke rose to his feet and made a long speech in German about the All-Highest and his merits; an effort which the Turks, who understood not a word of it all, applauded with immense enthusiasm.

After all their escapes and adventures it might be supposed that the much-tried survivors of the *Emden* had now reached the end of their Odyssey. But, in fact, some of their most trying experiences were yet to come. They were to find that the Indian Ocean is more easily crossed than the Arabian Desert. The *Choising*, incidentally, after landing her passengers, had

gone off to Massowah, in Italian Somaliland, which she safely reached, and where, a little later, when Italy joined the Allies, she was duly interned.

Von Mücke's object now was to reach the nearest accessible point on the Hedjaz railway, by which, travelling *via* Damascus and Aleppo, he and his men might hope eventually to arrive at Constantinople, and thence to return to Germany.

The first stage was a long and difficult journey to the north-west. The local Turks, though brimming over with goodwill, had very little suitable transport, and less equipment; the Germans began to suffer from the heat, and one or two died upon the way; and as soon as they were any distance from a Turkish post they were exposed to attacks from the Bedouin of the desert, who regarded all strangers impartially as their enemies.

Part of the journey was accomplished by sea in native craft that warily skirted the shore, and part by land with such transport as was available. When the travellers were close to Jeddah they had their most serious encounter with the Arabs, who came down on them in force. The Germans were obliged to form a perimeter and to fight a regular battle, which lasted the greater part of a night; and, though they succeeded in beating off the attacks, they lost an officer, two or three men, and all their transport. When morning came their assailants melted away,



allowing them to march unmolested into Jeddah.

They had now reached a more civilised neighbourhood, and their journey on to El Ala, on the Hedjaz Railway, was by comparison uneventful. On arrival there they were treated to a champagne banquet and given a special train, which took them in comfort to Aleppo, where, as von Mücke tells us, they found 'letters from loved ones and the Iron Cross.' Surely we can grudge them neither of these amenities.

From Aleppo they were taken on to Haider Pasha, where they were met by the German Admiral Souchon. Von Mücke, with pardonable 'swank,' advanced to meet him, clicked his heels Prussian fashion, saluted and said: "I report the landing squad from the *Emden*: five officers, seven petty officers and thirty men strong."

STRANGE STORIES OF TO-DAY



## STRANGE STORIES OF TO-DAY

### I

THERE are times when most of us feel that while we have gained much by the fruits of modern invention we have also lost something ; that while life is undoubtedly a safer and more comfortable business than it used to be, it has forfeited the mystery, the romance and the adventure of the old days. Perhaps that feeling will come to us most strongly when we are considering the annals of the sea. We conjure up the ships of the past, as they slip by, one after another, in a ghostly procession. We see the low galley of the Mediterranean seaboard, with its grace and its speed and that hint of the sinister about it which gives it a peculiar fascination ; or the Viking ships whose bones we disinter to-day in the estuaries of East Anglia ; or the caravels that struggled across the Ocean Sea to the discovery of the Americas ; or their big children, the galleons of Spain, lurching home with their mighty holds piled high with treasure ; or the ' wooden walls ' of Nelson's line of battle ; or the clippers, racing west with their cargoes of tea, whose last survivor, the *Cutty Sark*, has quite recently been rescued from an ignominious

old age. And when we have watched these splendid phantoms vanishing down the years, we may turn to the ships of to-day—the liner, the tramp, the tanker and the battleship. Surely, we feel, the glory has departed! Or, if not the glory, at least the romance.

Again, in imagination, we may visit the Seven Seas. Where is their mystery now? There they are—all charted, all explored, every island correctly shown, every reef—almost—exactly marked. Surely we go back with relief to those old charts on which the map-maker filled in the gaps in his geographical knowledge with drawings of legendary continents and fabulous beasts.

Yet we are wrong. The forms change, but the spirit continues. Slight as may appear the kinship between the Viking ship and the newest Cunarder, the sea remains the same. New adventures, new mysteries and new romances have taken the place of the old; for adventure, mystery and romance are concerned, not with the shape or the size or the substance of the ship, but with the sea itself and those who sail upon it. The last pirate has swung in chains on Execution Dock; but what of the crew of the *Emden*? The last lugger may have dropped its cargo of lace and brandy on the Dorset coast; but a very exciting volume might be compiled from the smuggling feats of to-day. More than three hundred years have passed since Drake fell like a thunderbolt on the port of Cadiz; yet it is



less than ten years since H.M.S. *Vindictive* sat down off the mole of Zeebrugge.

‘Romance brought up the nine-fifteen.’ Mr. Kipling is right ; and scarcely a year passes without its tally of remarkable escapes, of feats of endurance, of strange adventures by sea. Many of them, of course, befall the democracy of the ocean—the little ships that carry neither costly cargoes nor important passengers. Many others go unrecorded, save for a few paragraphs in the paper, read to-day and burned to-morrow. But they happen ; and the pity is that so many good stories escape the chronicler. Such a one, for example, was that of the *Utopia*, an ordinary tale of shipwreck, with just that touch of the terrible and the romantic about it that singles it out from a hundred others.

On a stormy evening in March 1891, a British squadron was lying at anchor in the Bay of Gibraltar, off the Ragged Staff, at the south end of the town. A south-westerly gale was blowing, and even in the comparatively sheltered anchorage quite a big sea was running. Suddenly an astonishing disaster took place. Round Europa Point, out of the darkness and the rain, loomed a steamer ; and before anyone in the fleet fully realised what was happening the newcomer had blundered into the squadron. In those days battleships carried strong steel rams, projecting some yards under the water ; and as the officers and men of the British ships watched with amazed

eyes the sudden appearance of this strange steamer she crashed into the ram of H.M.S. *Anson*. It all happened in a few seconds ; and ten minutes later the steamer, with a thirty-foot hole in her side, sank stern first in the waters of the bay.

That was the catastrophe of the *Utopia*, an Anchor Line ship of 2,731 tons, sailing from Naples to New York with a few first-class passengers and some 800 Italian emigrants aboard.

It was a terrible business. The *Utopia*, according to the account which her captain gave afterwards, was steaming at half speed round Europa Point with the intention of making the usual anchorage for ships of her line. There can be little question that at night, with a south-westerly gale blowing, she was taking a big risk. From the *Utopia's* bridge it was impossible to see what other ships were lying in the anchorage until she was almost among them. By daylight, and in calm weather, she might have threaded her way without mishap through the British squadron which—all unexpected—lay between her and her objective ; but on a stormy night she had about as much chance of passing safely through as has a ball of passing through a set of ninepins without knocking one over.

At first the captain, on sighting the squadron, tried to take his ship between the *Anson* and the New Mole, but immediately found the way blocked by H.M.S. *Curlew*. To avoid colliding

with her he then swung the *Utopia* round, in order to take her across the *Anson's* bows. It was a tragic manœuvre. The *Utopia*, in passing, was driven by wind and waves so close to the *Anson* that she was caught by, and impaled on, the battleship's ram; a huge hole was torn in her side, close to the stern; she was swept on a hundred yards or so, and then sank.

The scene that followed was one of the most horrible that has ever been witnessed from the Rock of Gibraltar. Directly after the impact the captain of the *Utopia* ordered the steam whistle to be blown, and almost simultaneously every ship in the squadron fired her alarm gun and turned her electric searchlight on to the sinking steamer. Crowds of people hurried down to the waterside. Through the wind and the blinding rain they could see the *Utopia*, set in a blaze of light; while above the din of sirens, the crash of guns and the roar of the storm, they could distinctly hear the shrill, pitiful cries of struggling, drowning men and women.

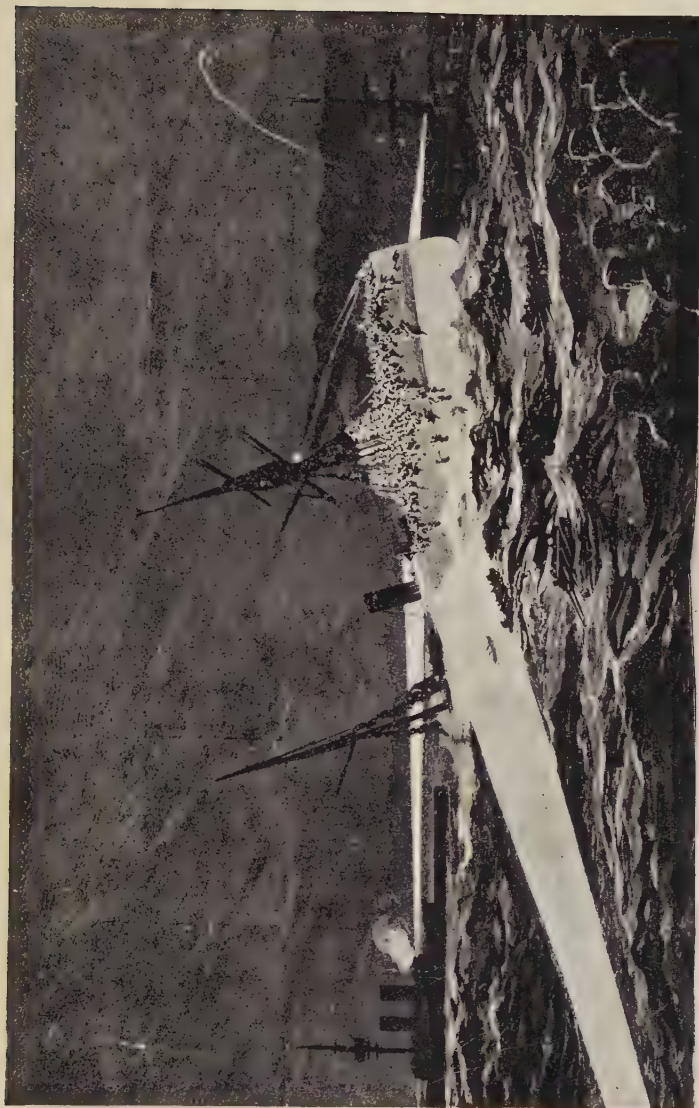
Those who were eye-witnesses that March night have declared that the sight was unforgettable in its horror; and on board the British warships two or three men were so distracted by the spectacle that they leaped frantically into the sea, feeling that they must do something—anything—rather than stand idly by.

As a matter of fact, the British ships were by no means idle. Boats were at once lowered, and at

great peril to the crews many gallant rescues were made. On one point all were agreed : that all was done that could be done ; that in the efforts made to save the lives of the drowning emigrants the finest traditions of the Royal Navy were upheld ; and that splendid assistance was also rendered by the crews of the Swedish warship *Freya* and of the cable-ship *Amter*. Some idea of the difficulty and danger under which the rescuers worked may be gathered from the fact that the launch of the *Immortalité* was driven ashore by the force of the waves, and that two of the bluejackets in her were drowned.

But the worst horrors took place in the *Utopia*. When the crash came a large number of the emigrants were on deck. Some of them made a rush for the life-buoys and boats ; but others tried to force their way below to find their families or to save their possessions. These unfortunate people, entering the hatchways, at once encountered a surge of frantic emigrants fighting to reach the deck. There was a mad panic ; knives were drawn and used ; and in a moment the hatchways were hopelessly jammed with a struggling, desperate mass of men and women. The panic grew every moment when it was seen that the ship was doomed ; and, all the outlets being blocked, nearly everyone who had not been on deck when the collision occurred was trapped and drowned. Afterwards the divers, who were sent down to examine the wreck, brought back fearful tales of





THE SINKING OF THE 'UTOPIA'

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the solid human wedges in every hatchway, and of the agonised faces of the dead that lay thickly strewn below.

In this fearful disaster 572 of the crew and passengers of the *Utopia* lost their lives ; while 24 of the crew and 292 of the emigrants, who had jumped boldly into the water or had clung to the rigging until the boats arrived, were saved.

There was a strangely romantic sequel to the sinking of the *Utopia*, which I will tell as it has been told to me by one who in turn had it from an eye-witness. Among the first-class passengers aboard was a young couple on their honeymoon. They were both fortunate enough to be on deck when the collision took place, and a little later, when it was clear that the ship was sinking, both jumped into the sea. The man was picked up by one of the boats, taken to hospital, and discharged as recovered a few days later. But with the death of his wife he had lost all desire to live. Desperate with grief, he was wandering aimlessly about the streets of Gibraltar when, rounding a corner, he suddenly came face to face with a woman apparently as distraught as he was himself. It was his wife ! She had been picked up by another boat and sent to a different hospital. Those who saw this strange encounter in a public thoroughfare between two people, each mourning the other as dead, described it as so poignant that the crowd which gathered round was moved to tears.

## II

A story with which we are all more familiar is that of the *Trevesa*, whose splendid record Captain Foster has told in full in his *1,700 Miles in Open Boats*. The facts are well worth recalling in any volume that deals with strange adventures by sea.

The *Trevesa* was a German-built ship of 3,121 tons, handed over to the Shipping Controller under the terms of the Peace Treaty, and sold by him to the Hain Steamship Company of St. Ives. The change of flag brought no good luck with it. The *Trevesa* had been in the hands of her new owners for scarcely two years when she foundered at sea.

The mischief apparently began at Port Pirie, in South Australia, where she took on board a cargo of zinc concentrates from the Broken Hill mines. For twenty years or more these concentrates had been shipped from Port Pirie, and in all that time nothing had happened to suggest that, if properly stowed, they were a dangerous cargo to carry. They were always loaded in the form of slime, or half-set cement, which lay in the holds in a semi-solid mass, and over which a hard crust would occasionally form. The *Trevesa* took in about 6,500 tons of these concentrates. They were stowed in the usual way, under the supervision of Captain Mars, the Lloyd's surveyor, who gave a certificate to the effect that the work had been properly carried out, and that all the customary

precautions had been taken. Under his instructions the spaces between the timbers or floorboards of the hold were filled with raw oakum, loosely packed, so that the concentrates might not percolate into the bilges and choke the pumps. That was one danger obviated; but another remained, the significance of which does not seem to have been realised until the disaster to the *Trevessa* pointed to it. These zinc concentrates, once loaded and set, are impenetrable by water. If, therefore, a ship, with her holds full of them, were to encounter heavy seas, and—from one cause or another—to spring a leak, the water entering would lie on the top of the cargo. It would not pass, as it should, down into the bilge, from which it could be cleared by the ship's pumps. This point is important, since, in the opinion of the Court of Enquiry and of every competent authority, the nature of the cargo which the *Trevessa* was carrying was partially responsible for her loss.

After leaving Port Pirie, the *Trevessa* called at Fremantle, where she took in some coal before starting, on May 21st, on her voyage across the Indian Ocean to Durban. Almost at once she ran into heavy weather. On her first day out the wind freshened, and gradually increased in force until it blew a gale, which continued with varying violence until June 3rd. There was always a pretty big sea running, and from time to time the *Trevessa* steamed into a really bad patch; in fact, on the morning of June 3rd a huge wave

crashed into her amidships, tearing the two port lifeboats from their lashings, and doing a fair amount of incidental damage on deck.

While, however, she was undoubtedly having a rough passage, no alarm was felt for the safety of the ship until midnight on June 3rd, when one of the crew, Scully by name, reported that he had heard the wash of water in the forward hold. This report, combined with the fact that the *Trevesa* was beginning to take the seas badly—was smothering herself (as they say), and clearing slowly—aroused Captain Foster's apprehensions. The pumps were manned, but the bilges and tanks were found to be empty; the mischief was not there. He then went forward with the chief engineer and the carpenter to investigate, and very soon it was apparent to him that the forward hold was full of water.

What precisely had happened will never be known. After leaving Fremantle the *Trevesa* must have sprung a leak; but why she sprung it remains a mystery. After she was handed over to the Hain Steamship Company she was thoroughly surveyed and reconditioned, at a cost of £36,000; after which she was classified A1 by Lloyd's. There should therefore have been nothing amiss with the ship. At Port Pirie, it is true, it was noticed that two rivets were 'weeping' slightly, and a cement box had accordingly been placed against the defective portion of the skin; but this was a small matter. The crew themselves

differed in their opinions as to how the trouble arose. Michael Scully, the experienced old seaman who had been the first to hear the swishing of the water in the hold, believed that the weight of the *Trevessa's* cargo was too much for her, and that she 'burst her forefoot.' One or two others thought the severity of the weather opened a seam in her. And others, again, stated afterwards that at ten o'clock on the evening of the 3rd they had heard a 'big bump like a gun going off'; and this, they suggested, might have been caused by collision with a mass of floating wreckage.

Whatever the cause may have been, there could be very little doubt that June night as to what was going to happen. In a short time the ship was down by the head, and heavy seas were breaking over the hatches. There was no time to be lost; and at one o'clock in the morning Captain Foster sent out an S.O.S. on the wireless and ordered the boats to be got ready.

Captain Foster in his narrative is so modest about his own achievements that he leaves it to the reader to suggest that the men of the *Trevessa* were singularly fortunate in the experience of their captain. On one occasion during the war he had been torpedoed more than 300 miles W.S.W. of the Scilly Islands, and his crew, taking to the boats, had successfully reached the north coast of Spain. It followed that he knew most of what there was to know about the provisioning and handling of ship's boats. He had learnt to keep,



for instance, his boats in the pink of condition ; he was careful to overhaul their stores at regular intervals ; he had instructed the steward as to what supplies were to be loaded when the order to abandon ship was given ; and he had found that on a long voyage in an open boat the very best food for its bulk is condensed milk.

Minute by minute, as the boats were being loaded, the *Trevessa's* plight became more critical. She was settling fast, the collision bulkheads had begun to give way, and water was pouring through the forecastles and into the forepeak. Gradually her stern rose so high in the water that the propellers were racing close to the surface. Nevertheless, perfect discipline prevailed. Every man had his job and did it. The engineers stayed in the engine-room until they were ordered up. The boats were successfully lowered—no easy job on a dark night, with a gale blowing and a heavy sea running ; and not a man tried to enter them until the signal was given. Just before leaving the ship the wireless operator sent out a final message, telling what had happened, and giving the latitude and longitude of the sinking *Trevessa*.

By 2.15 a.m. all the arrangements had been completed. The ship was abandoned and every man was in his boat, launched on an ordeal more protracted than any anticipated and as searching as any in the long annals of the sea.

Let us see exactly what the men of the *Trevessa*

were about to attempt, and what resources they had for the enterprise.

The point in the Indian Ocean where they took to the boats was about 1,600 miles west of Fremantle and 1,728 east of the Mauritius group. The *Trevesa*, therefore, having been abandoned practically in mid-ocean, three courses were open to Captain Foster. The first and, as some might suppose, the most obvious plan, was to stay as far as possible where he was. The S.O.S. had been answered by three steamers, the *Runic*, the *Trevean* and one other ; and it was reasonable to suppose that these would at once make all speed for the point given them. Captain Foster, however, had no idea how near these vessels might be. Several days might pass before they arrived, and in the meantime the boats might be swept far from the spot by the powerful currents operating. Two sextants had been taken from the ship, so that it was possible—though at times very difficult—to fix the latitude of the boats ; on the other hand, in the hurry of the evacuation chronometers had been overlooked, so that the longitude could only be ascertained very roughly. The boats might be carried many miles east or west before the rescuing ships came up, and in this way—especially if the bad weather continued—they might easily be overlooked. Possibly, too, Captain Foster had another reason for rejecting this plan. To stand by for several days in mid-ocean would have imposed a very severe

strain on the *moral* of his men. To give them something definite to do, some goal at which to aim, may have seemed the wiser policy ; and if the boats kept approximately to the latitude given on the wireless there was always the chance that they might be seen and picked up.

For which point, then, were they to make ? Captain Foster rightly dismissed as impracticable a course to the north or to the south. The first would have meant a long voyage into tropical waters, where the heat of the sun would have aroused intolerable thirst ; the second offered no more hospitable a port than the small and uninhabited islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam, to be reached through westerly gales and bitter cold. There remained the east and west routes—back to Fremantle or on to Mauritius. Fremantle, it is true, was the nearer by a matter of 130 miles ; on the other hand, the captain reckoned that the prevailing winds were more likely to be favourable to the Mauritius course, and would more than counterbalance the difference in mileage. Mauritius, at any rate, was his decision, and it is difficult to find fault with it.

The crew of the *Trevessa* were accommodated in the two starboard lifeboats, Number 1 and Number 3. Number 1 was commanded by Captain Foster and contained twenty men ; and Number 3, under the chief officer, Mr. Smith, had taken in twenty-four men. Both boats were quite first class, otherwise they could never have

completed their voyage. Happily, the old days, when it was thought a waste of money to put good workmanship into life-saving apparatus, and a waste of time to keep the gear in proper order, are over. During the war we learnt to take no risks. The *Trevessa's* two boats were about twenty-six feet long and eight feet broad. Each was provided with mast and sail, eight rowing oars and one steering oar, boat-hook, sea-anchor, hatchets, spirit compass, spare ropes, oil bag and so on. Number 1 boat, as a matter of fact, was on view at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley during the summer of 1924, so that everybody had an opportunity of inspecting it and its equipment, and of judging the adequacy of these for the task set.

As for the provisions, by Board of Trade regulation each boat must always contain a quart of water and two pounds of biscuit per man of its possible complement. In addition to these, before abandoning ship two more water breakers were loaded, giving a total of about fourteen gallons in one boat and rather more in the other ; and six cases of milk and twelve tins of biscuits were distributed between the two boats.

Until dawn they stood by. At a quarter to three the *Trevessa* foundered, going down with her lights burning, leaving her crew of forty-four men alone in the heart of the Indian Ocean. When morning came, no trace of the ship remained save a few pieces of floating wreckage.

Shortly after dawn the two boats started on their long westward voyage. Very soon, however, a considerable disparity appeared in the sailing powers of Number 1 and Number 3. The former had a larger sail, which, though it made her more difficult to handle, gave her a great superiority in speed. She would sail on for a few hours and then heave-to and stand by in order to allow the other boat to overhaul her. This procedure went on for five days, and then Captain Foster decided that the two boats had better separate, each making her way as best she could to the Mauritius. Obviously it was the right policy for the faster boat to push ahead, so that on reaching land she might send help to the other.

The ensuing voyage was the more terrible for its monotony. Day after day slipped by, each bringing with it little but the same dreary routine, the same discomforts, the same tormenting thirst. In both boats, though neither was carrying more than half its scheduled complement, the men were desperately cramped. They could not change their positions, yet owing to the constant motion of the boats they were never quite still; they became so stiff and sore that the least touch was agony. The sea was nearly always rough; and the boats were constantly shipping water, so that the men were drenched to the skin for hours at a time. Occasional squalls of rain, welcome as they were for the sake of the water supply, added to the general dampness. A hot drink was an impossible



luxury, and any sort of drink, under Captain Foster's rationing, was a rare and sorry affair. Four teaspoonfuls of milk, a small tobacco tin full of water, and some biscuit, made up the day's supply for each man in Number 1; and in the other boat much the same scale was followed. The men were always thirsty. One or two, much against Captain Foster's advice, drank sea-water, and suffered from the effects. Others found relief in sluicing their head and shoulders in the sea, or in drawing the salt water through their nostrils and blowing it out again.

When we recall the sufferings of the men of the *Trevessa* from thirst, exposure and long confinement at close quarters, we should also remember that they were not buoyed up by any certainty of ultimately winning through. At almost any moment a sea slightly heavier than usual might have swamped them. Or, again, the difficulty of taking the latitude in a small boat might have led to a serious error in reckoning. They might have missed Rodriguez Island, the nearest of the Mauritius group; have missed Mauritius, 346 miles on; even have missed Madagascar, lying still farther west. How real this danger was believed to be both by Captain Foster and Mr. Smith may be gathered from the fact that little more than half the water supply had been expended when the boats reached land. For thirst was the great foe. In a modified form it was always with them; and scarcely a man in those boats was not

haunted by dread of that greater thirst—the thirst that comes when all the water is exhausted, the thirst that first tortures, then maddens, and finally kills. Yet in neither boat did courage, discipline and good spirits ever desert the men. They were, in Captain Foster's words, 'a wonderful crowd.' They laughed, they joked, they sang songs ; they never lost heart ; and in the end they had their reward.

Number 1 boat, the faster of the two, was the first to reach safety. On the afternoon of June 26th, twenty-three days after the foundering of the *Trevessa*, the carpenter suddenly shouted out that he could see land. Amid great excitement his statement was verified by those in the boat with the keenest eyesight ; and in a few minutes any lingering doubts were scattered. It was the island of Rodriguez, the very spot for which Captain Foster had been making. The boat ran into Port Mathurin that same evening, her crew receiving, as was only natural, a tremendous reception from the staff of the Eastern Telegraph Company on the island. In a very short time they had been helped ashore—most of them were unable to stand—put to bed, and supplied—in strict moderation—with food and drink. Captain Foster had brought all his boat's crew—with two exceptions—safely in. The exceptions were the Arab seamen, Jacob Ali and Mussim Nagi, who, after several days of sickness, had died and been buried at sea.

Number 3 boat, commanded by Mr. Smith, was less fortunate. She carried, it will be remembered, twenty-four men as against twenty in Number 1; and, in addition, she missed Rodriguez Island, and did not sight Mauritius until the evening of the 28th, twenty-five days after the sinking of the *Trevessa*. There were several casualties among her crew. The second engineer, Mr. Mordecai, fell overboard, and was drowned before he could be rescued; two of the coloured men, who drank sea-water, succumbed shortly afterwards; while of the white men, one apprentice and the donkey-man died in the boat, and the cook in hospital at Mauritius.

When we consider what the men in both boats endured we may well wonder, not that so many lives were lost, but that so many survived. And we shall certainly echo the verdict of the Court of Enquiry, held subsequently in London, that 'it was unable to find words adequately to express its admiration of the fine seamanship and resolution of the officers, and the splendid discipline and courage of the crew, both European and non-European.'

### III

The foundering of the *Trevessa*, costing eleven lives and bringing much suffering to those who survived, may be classified as a tragedy—albeit a glorious tragedy. Let me, therefore, conclude this

volume with another strange story of to-day, containing much that is farcical and certainly not an atom of tragedy. It is the story of the abduction of a battleship.

During the summer of 1924 a revolution broke out in the Republic of Brazil, affecting chiefly the wealthy province and city of Sao Paulo. At first the rebels, who were joined by certain disaffected units of the Brazilian Army, made considerable progress. They obtained control of Sao Paulo and the neighbouring districts, and, being well supplied with arms and ammunition, were able for a while to defy the efforts of the Government to dislodge them. At length, however, reserves of regular troops were brought up, and after some heavy fighting in the outskirts of Sao Paulo, during which artillery was freely used and a good deal of damage was done to buildings and property, the Government forces were victorious. The revolutionary army, beaten and broken, dispersed into bands which made their way to the less accessible parts of the country, where for some months they carried on a guerilla warfare and provided rallying-points for the opponents of the Government.

Incidentally the revolution, which was a very serious business, was apparently not merely the usual South American 'rough and tumble' between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'—that is, between those who have got all the plums of office and those who think they ought to have them. The revolutionaries had real grievances,



NUMBER 1 BOAT OF THE 'TREVESSA'

(From an original photograph kindly lent by Messrs. Martin  
Hopkinson & Co. and slightly touched up)

*To face page 268*



1891

1892

1893

and appear to have been fired by a genuine enthusiasm for administrative purity. Moreover, they were largely supported and financed by the foreign element in the population, which was disgusted by the inefficiency and corruption in high places. The movement failed, perhaps because the Brazilian on the whole preferred King Log to King Stork ; yet it had an amazing and ludicrous sequel, which is fully worthy of record.

The Brazilian Navy, by its possession of two first-class—or nearly first-class—battleships, is the most powerful in South America. These two ships, the *Sao Paulo* and the *Minas Geraes*, are the pride of the nation and the flower of the fleet. On November 4th, 1924, they were lying at their usual moorings in the harbour of Rio de Janeiro, under the admiring eyes of the Government and population of the Brazilian capital. Then—without any warning—trouble began. The senior officers of the *Sao Paulo* were all ashore, doubtless on what are known in the British Army as ‘ Urgent Private Affairs,’ leaving five second lieutenants, the most junior commissioned officers in the Navy, in charge of the ship. In order to find a parallel for the delightful audacity of the ensuing stroke we must imagine—if we can—five midshipmen in H.M.S. *Iron Duke* taking advantage of the absence of their seniors to raise a mutiny aboard. This, at any rate, is more or less what happened in the *Sao Paulo*. These five desperate young

gentlemen—most of them were still in their teens—who had been left in command, having obtained the support of the petty officers and crew, hoisted the Red Flag and declared their adhesion to the Revolutionary Party. They then presented the following ultimatum<sup>1</sup> to their sister ship, the *Minas Geraes*, which was lying at anchor close by :

‘ The battleship *Sao Paulo*, in sympathy with the just appeal of the Brazilian Public, has decided, in full accord with other units of the Navy and a great part of the Army, to assume a hostile attitude towards the demands of the Government in power.

‘ In view whereof the *Minas Geraes* is invited to join in this crusade. Reply must be given within a period of ten minutes after receipt of this notice. Should it be affirmative, all the complement, including the officers, will be considered as forming the revolting party ; all others to be disembarked or to be landed at once. The *Sao Paulo* is under steam and ready for action.’

Unfortunately, however, for the plans of the revolutionaries, their secret had already leaked out ; and any chance they had of inducing the crew of the other Brazilian battleship to follow their example was spoilt by the prompt action of

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*.

Senhor Alexandrino de Alencar, the Minister of Marine, who hurried on board the *Minas Geraes* in time to prevent a second catastrophe.

Foiled at this point, the ringleaders next resolved to make off with their ship ; and in executing this manœuvre they played a glorious and completely successful game of bluff with the authorities. For observe the dilemma which confronted the unfortunate Minister of Marine when he saw the *Sao Paulo* slip her cable and steam slowly for the mouth of the harbour. He might follow one of two courses. Either he could stand idly by while five boys fresh from school got away with the finest ship in the Brazilian Navy under the guns of one battleship and a number of land forts. Or else—terrible alternative—he could give the signal for a general action which, raging at such close quarters, would probably result in one—if not both—of Brazil's battleships being sent to the bottom. As battleships are expensive articles, and the Brazilian currency is a depreciated commodity, the loss would have been quite irreplaceable ; and the Brazilian Navy, for the purpose of warfare on any scale at all, would have ceased to exist.

Of the two evils the Minister chose the lesser, as, indeed, the mutineers must have known that he would choose. (Surely there were the makings of a Nelson in one of those sub-lieutenants ! ) The *Sao Paulo* sauntered out of Rio in the most leisurely fashion. She even stopped for an hour

off the President's Palace on the Praia Flamengo—an uncomfortable hour for the Presidential household! At eleven o'clock she passed on, keeping her guns trained on the *Minas Geraes*, whose crew must have felt the suspense more than a little trying. As the *Sao Paulo* came out of the harbour the forts opened fire on her, but she scarcely troubled to reply. Although a considerable bombardment took place, it was noticed that the shells all fell wide of their target; which, considering the closeness of the range, was a triumph of tactful gunnery rather than an exhibition of poor marksmanship. Shortly after midday the *Sao Paulo* was out of sight, steaming off undamaged and—for the moment—unpursued on her adventures.

Here we have the beginnings of a really good story, in which all the finest traditions of comic opera have been faithfully maintained. We have a first-class battleship, with plenty of ammunition aboard and sufficient coal in her bunkers to carry her 5,000 miles, let loose upon the high seas under the control of five boys. What a chance for a little up-to-date piracy!

Alas! the rest of the tale is anti-climax. Perhaps the mutineers had expected the unconditional surrender of the Government on the arrival of their ultimatum; perhaps they could agree on no definite plan of action; or perhaps all along they had just been 'fed up' with Rio and wanted to get away from it. This last explanation,



wildly improbable as it must appear, is certainly suggested by their subsequent conduct.

Sadly I must confess that these five sub-lieutenants, despite their promising start, despite the remarkable bluff they had put up, despite all the wonderful possibilities in the situation, merely took their stolen battleship to Monte Video, where they meekly surrendered her to the Government of Uruguay. And that was really the end of the story. After allowing a safe interval to elapse the *Minas Geraes* set off in pursuit of her sister ship. She reached Monte Video shortly after the *Sao Paulo* had been handed over to the local authorities, who in turn restored her to her rightful owners. Thus she returned to Rio, to resume the honour, which she still retains, of being the flower of the Brazilian fleet and the pride of the Brazilian people. Nothing, however, can quite alter the fact that for one disgraceful, calamitous week she was as much a piece of stolen property as is a watch taken from an old gentleman's pocket at a provincial race-meeting.

As for the five sub-lieutenants, history tells us no more of them. But we may safely presume that, saving an untimely end, a very promising future lies in front of them.

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